the weekly Standard

AUGUST 29, 2005

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THE WAR ON TERROR: YEAR FIVE
JEFFREY BELL & FRANK CANNON

NORTH OF THE BORDER

WITH THE MINUTEMEN IN ARIZONA AND NEW MEXICO

BY MATT LABASH

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"Terrible News for the U.N."

Well, the *New York Times* has been vindicated. The arrival of John Bolton, the new U.S. ambassador to the U.N., is indeed "terrible news for the United Nations," as the *Times* editorialized on August 2. Of course, they thought this was a bad thing. It's been the position of the *Times* for years that the U.S. ambassador should have a high opinion of the United Nations. As we've said before, Bolton's critics seem to think his job is to be the U.N.'s ambassador to the United States and not the other way around.

But in fact, the U.N. cries out for adult supervision, and only gets it from U.S. ambassadors, as Bolton is already turning out to be. Item: The *Times*'s own James Bennet, reporting on the Israeli pullout from the Gaza Strip on August 15, noted the peculiar provenance of some Palestinian propaganda on display: "Around the corner was a banner from the Palestinian Authority, which is dominated by a more secular faction, Fatah. 'Gaza today,' it read, 'the West Bank and Jerusalem Tomorrow.' A tag line said the banner was paid for by the United Nations Development Program." Because that's just the sort of development Palestinians need: fancier banners to taunt Israel with, paid for by Western taxpayers.

Enter Ambassador Bolton. As the *New York Sun* reported on August 18, in a development the *Times* has so far neglected to let its readers in on, "America's newly installed ambassador to the United Nations, John Bolton, labeled 'inappropriate and unacceptable' the United Nations Development Program financing of materials bearing the slogan 'Today Gaza, Tomorrow the West Bank and Jerusalem.'

"Mr. Bolton said yesterday that the UNDP had failed to explain why it funneled money to the Palestinian Authority to back the production of banners, bumper stickers, mugs, and T-shirts bearing the provocative slogan as well as UNDP logos."

And as night follows day, a UNDP administrator, Kemal Dervis, has admitted that it was "not at all acceptable" that the agency's logo had been placed on the propaganda. "We cannot be involved in political messaging," he said.

Yes, indeed. This is terrible news for the U.N., no doubt a source of heartburn for officials of the Palestinian Authority and editors of the *New York Times*, but reason, we think, to extend a hearty welcome to Ambassador Bolton, the latest cop on the East River beat. ♦

Mr. Roberts's Neighborhood

"Robert's Indiana Hometown Draws Scrutiny," read the ominous headline on a dispatch sent out last Wednesday by the Associated Press. Oddly enough, at no point in the lengthy story that followed was there identified so much as a single human being from whom Long Beach, Indiana, actually *is* drawing any scrutiny at the moment—AP correspondents Tom Coyne and Ashley M. Heher themselves excepted, of course.

But never mind about that. More people *ought* to be scrutinizing the place, that much is clear. Because it now devolves, as AP's blockbuster investigative report went on to explain, that "the exclusive lakefront community where Supreme Court nominee John G. Roberts Jr. grew up during the racially turbulent 1960s and '70s once banned the sale of homes to nonwhites and Jews." Worse yet, in July 1970, "just three miles" from this cesspool of bigotry, "two days of looting and vandalism erupted," leading to the eventual arrest of several employees at the same Bethlehem Steel job-training program where Roberts "worked summers to help pay for Harvard."

The obvious question arising: Could "Roberts's upbringing in this Northern Indiana community"—with its secret history of anti-Semitism and violent white supremacy—have materially "influenced his views" about the law?

"It is hard to know," Coyne and Heher cautiously conclude. Maybe. On the one hand, there's all that ugly stuff in Roberts' past, as described above.

On the other hand, however, there's the fact—which they are careful to obscure, though not quite dishonest enough to leave out altogether—that it isn't really Roberts's past at all.

"The Roberts property did not include a racially restrictive covenant," the AP story's ninth paragraph reveals. Those 1970 riots, its seventeenth paragraph adds for good measure, took place not in Long Beach but in Michigan City, an entirely separate jurisdiction. And Roberts was still in high school at the time; his summer jobs at that Bethlehem Steel plant were still several years off in the future. Whatever. ♦

Notes from the Underground

"Theorists have posited," the American Political Science Association mordantly observes, "that under the proper conditions democratic decision-making will produce fair and just social outcomes." But, hey, theory is for nerds. Bottom line is, it's "clearer today than it has been for decades that the struggle for democracy" is incomplete and fraught with risk, even—perhaps

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especially—in "established democracies" like you-know-where, whose "basic institutions" face "encroachment and decline." And are America's political scientists going to take this George W. Bush stuff lying down? They most definitely are not.

Instead, a brave and defiant APSA, marching under the theme of "Mobilizing Democracy," will convene its 101st annual meeting here in Washington September 1, and will urge its 6,000 conventioneering professors—and the rest of us—to "connect with the discipline" by attending a series of extremely important roundtable discussions. Like, for example, Panel 3 of the Conference Group on Theory, Policy, and Society, which will investigate the question, "Is It Time to Call It Fascism?"

The issue is both "substantive" and "strategic/tactical," panel chair Dvora Yanow of Cal State, Hayward, explains: "Is there a theoretical-definitional grounding to make a claim for the present U.S. administration as fascist, and is it useful, critically, to use that language at this point in time?" Answers from Ms. Yanow and her eight co-panelists will be forthcoming Saturday, September 3, at 10:15 A.M. in the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel. Unless, of course, the answer is "yes," in which case the secret police will probably long since have rounded them all up. ♦

Nothing to See Here

The Air America scandal continues to metastasize. The national board of directors for Boys and Girls Clubs of America is considering a formal staff recommendation that the organization expel its Bronx, New York, affiliate, the Gloria Wise Boys and Girls Club, for apparent involvement in—and concealment of—a scheme by which nearly $900,000 was improperly diverted to the liberal radio network from bank accounts intended to fund social service programs for disadvantaged children and the elderly. "It's a very, very serious matter," Boys and Girls Clubs spokesman Evan McElroy told the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* last week.

And he's not the only one who thinks so. At least two law enforcement agencies, the New York City Department of Investigation and the New York State attorney general's office, have confirmed an active interest in the matter. And, tangentially at least, the courts are already involved, as well. Bloggers Michelle Malkin and Brian Maloney, who've together done more than anyone else to advance the story, now report that Air America is being sued by an unpaid creditor who alleges, among other things, that the network's current parent company, Piquant LLC, is merely a sham reincorporation of the "predecessor" outfit that filched the Boys and Girls Club money.

Meanwhile, Byron Calame, "public editor" of the *New York Times*, has quietly filed a post to his "web journal" acknowledging that his colleagues "showed up late" to the Air America story and thus "poorly served" their readers.

Only after "weeks of articles by other newspapers" did the *Times* finally get around to noticing the scandal in its own backyard. And this oversight was especially regrettable, Calame allowed, in light of the "flurry of articles" the paper had run during the happy-face PR blitz surrounding Air America's debut in the spring of 2004. It's inconsistencies like these, he pointed out, that typically give rise to "a perception of liberal bias" at the *Times*, and before you know it, certain of the paper's right-wingier subscribers are writing in to complain.

Calame does have some good news to report, however. In this particular case, at least, any perception of liberal bias at the *Times* is one "for which I haven't found any evidence after checking with editors at the paper." ♦

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Casual

Hoosier Daddy?

I'm not a Hoosier myself, but my wife was born and brought up in Fort Wayne, and therefore, under the Indiana Law of Return, our two children are legally Hoosiers as well. Whether this circumstance gives me kibitzing rights, allowing me to second-guess the actions of the Indiana state legislature as it tries to balance the state budget, I don't know. But I'm going to anyway—kibitz, I mean.

We were in Indiana this month, these three Hoosiers and I, driving a rented van through the rolling hills that lie below Bloomington. In keeping with a peculiar obsession of mine, we were looking for landmarks in the life of Abraham Lincoln. Illinois gets all the Lincoln props, being the place where he grew from a young to an old man, but Indiana can claim him, too. He came to Indiana with his family as an eight-year-old boy in 1817 and spent the next 13 years there. With the departure of Bobby Knight for Texas and the declining career of Florence Henderson, Lincoln just might be the most prominent Hoosier of them all.

For years Hoosiers were pleased with the association and eager to draw attention to it. Southern Indiana is thick with Lincoln markers. Stopping for ice cream one hot afternoon in Grandview, a dot of a town on the bank of the Ohio River, I nearly drove the van into an old stone pile rising unexpectedly next to a convenience store. Bolted to it was an ancient metal plaque, weathered to green. "In 1827 Abraham Lincoln passed this way," it read, "and joked and wrestled with the local boys." A few miles away, Anderson's Creek empties into the Ohio river, forming a little estuary shaded by locust and poplar trees. The marker here is laconic in the Hoosier manner, but if you know what you're looking at, the place is full of meaning. Here Lincoln had his first job, piloting a ferry across the river, and here he embarked for his first look at the outside world, hopping a flatboat bound for New Orleans. Both experiences acquainted him with a range of human life unusual in the experience of a pioneer boy. By the time Lincoln moved to Illinois he'd become a man, and a worldly one.

Darren Gygi

One of my favorite Indiana landmarks is less conventional than the others. The Lincoln Amphitheater, an open-air venue set deep in a second-growth forest, lies about 40 miles from Evansville, across the state road from Lincoln Boyhood National Park, which encompasses the 50 acres the Lincolns farmed during their years in Indiana. For 17 summers the amphitheater has staged a musical called "Young Abe Lincoln," an idealized account of his Hoosier upbringing. I don't claim the show would be to everyone's taste. The young performers exhibit the same fresh-faced wholesomeness that used to send people screaming from their homes whenever Up With People or the Osmonds appeared on the Ed Sullivan show. The tunes, relying heavily on the gimmicks of country music, could be more tuneful, and a few of the dance numbers go on too long. But in my opinion the charm of the production, its purity of intent, overpowers all quibbles.

This is partly a matter of place. The proscenium opens out into the woods, so you can see the trees darken as the sun sets. Then the lights come up and the drama unfolds to the tireless descant of cicadas and crickets. When one of the characters looks out over the footlights and imagines the "knoll over yonder" where Nancy Hanks, Lincoln's mother, lies buried, the moment carries a special tremor; for on that knoll over yonder, just beyond the parking lot, Nancy Hanks really does lie buried.

The players got a standing ovation the night we showed up. But then one of the actors stepped forward to announce that this performance of "Young Abe Lincoln" would be the last, not just for this season but forever. The Indiana legislature has cut its $200,000 subsidy, dooming the production unless some other sponsor can be found—an unlikely prospect.

Plentiful as they are, you begin to notice something about the Lincoln markers as you wander Indiana: They're old, really old. Most were put up in the 1920s and '30s, by a generation that has passed away and that might seem, to a contemporary eye, as remote as the man the markers were meant to honor. "Young Abe Lincoln" was also a marker of a sort: evidence that the urge to commemorate Lincoln hadn't died away from Indiana altogether. It proved a newer generation of Hoosiers was still willing to ennoble the place they live in by conjuring up the memory of their favorite son. With the lights dimming onstage, watching the young cast members hug one another goodbye, I wondered why the state legislature didn't understand this too.

Andrew Ferguson

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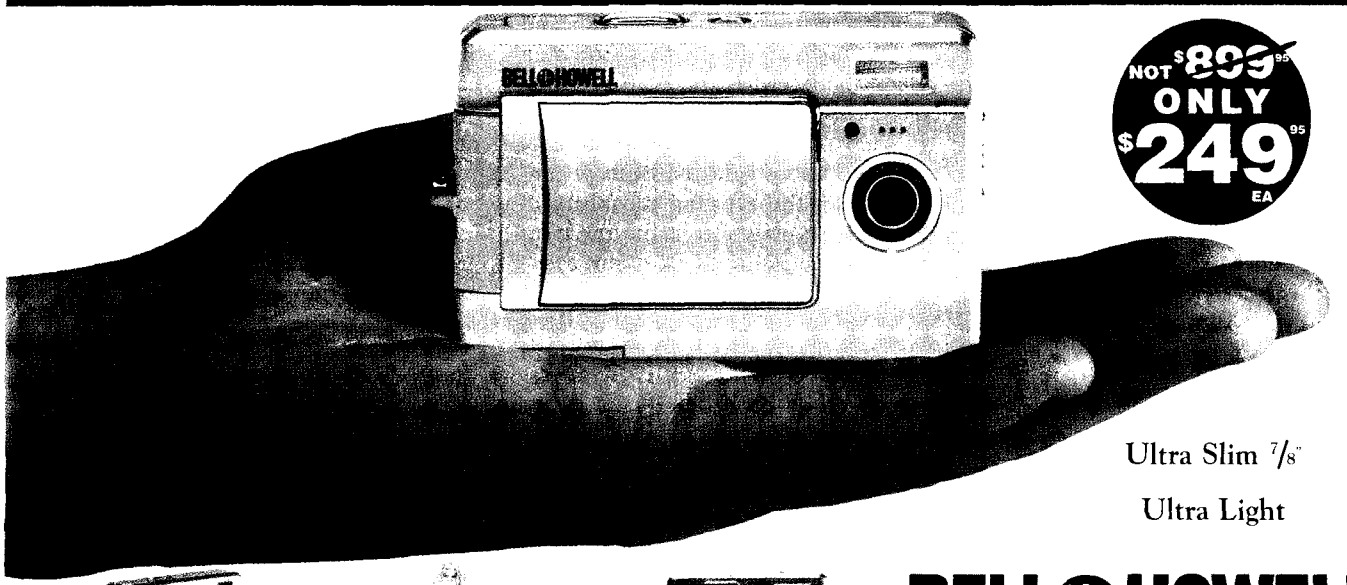

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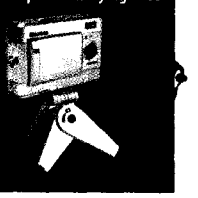

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Rumsfeld v. Kristol

In his recent editorial ("Bush v. Rumsfeld," Aug. 15 / Aug. 22), William Kristol thinks that he senses the "inescapable whiff of weakness and defeatism" in the leadership of the Pentagon. This is nonsense.

Kristol thinks that talking about a "struggle against violent extremism" is a step down from the "war on terror." They are one and the same. The president constantly reminds us that this is a new kind of war.

It isn't to diminish the war effort, as Kristol suggests, but to strengthen it, that the president and the secretary of defense describe it as a broad effort against an extremist, "murderous ideology"—one that must involve all the elements of national power.

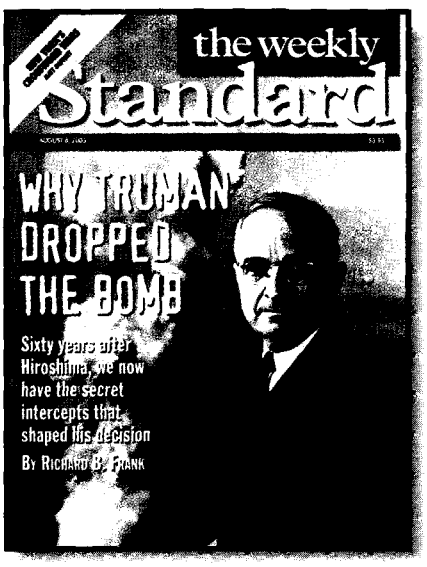
Kristol also mistakes determination for defeatism in Iraq. "The new administration mantra," he writes, "is that the insurgency can be beaten only politically." This "new mantra" is in fact an elementary principle of modern counter insurgency operations and certainly is the key to success in Iraq. The Iraqi people will defeat the insurgency when they starve it of what it needs most—domestic credibility.

Kristol seems to argue that a political process is not enough and points out that the insurgency survived the successful elections of January 30. By the insurgents' own acknowledgment, their failure to prevent those elections was a major setback. The tally is clearly on the side of the Iraqi people; every political milestone on the road to self-government has been met.

Iraqi self-government will succeed not because of military force, but because of the power of the emerging Iraqi government to persuade Iraqis that there is no more hopeful alternative future than freedom and self-government. Recent polls show that Sunnis are increasingly turning against the insurgency, with many Sunni leaders acknowledging that the time has come to join the political process. This surely marks yet another setback for the insurgents, whose only program appears to be wanton murder in order to grab headlines.

As the president recently suggested, the insurgents can kill innocents, but they cannot hope for victory. As Iraqi security forces stand up throughout the country, common Iraqis can see that their fathers, husbands, and sons are defending them in their own neighborhoods. Kristol may think it is defeatist to show confidence in the growing capability of the Iraqi security forces, but the Iraqi people—according to most surveys—do not share that view.

Lawrence Di Rita
Pentagon Spokesman
Washington, DC



The Bomb

Richard B. Frank's "Why Truman Dropped the Bomb" (Aug. 8) initially made me uneasy, because like millions of Americans, I have been bombarded for years by politically correct "critics" who hold that America was the bad guy vis-à-vis Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Fortunately, Frank impressively upheld The Weekly Standard's reputation for integrity.

I had a special interest in the matter, because in August 1945 I was the navigator on the U.S. Navy advance-base oil tanker *Caribou* stationed in Guam. Everyone, more or less, knew that planning for the next "big one" (an invasion of the Japanese mainland) was underway. Considering how tough our victories in Iwo Jima and Okinawa had been, Operation Olympic would involve frightful casualties—Allies and Japanese—one of which might very well have been me. Thus, the consequences of the events of August 6 and 9 were received with relief.

Over the years, on a number of occasions, I've spent time going over in my mind just what I thought about Truman's decision, and I always come to the conclusion that, all things considered, he did the right thing.

In that regard, I have always appreciated the comments of the South African Laurens Van der Post on the subject. He was a colonel in the South African Army who organized anti-Japanese guerrilla units in Java in 1942. He was captured by the Japanese and spent the next three years in prison under increasingly brutal conditions.

When the prisoners heard on their clandestine radio of the dropping of the bomb, they were both exhilarated and quite worried. They knew the Japanese were losing the war and that the bomb was a massive blow to the Japanese military position. And they knew, given those facts, that the lives of the prisoners in Southeast Asia were in serious jeopardy. With the Japanese unconditional surrender, however, this issue became moot: Van der Post and tens of thousands of his fellow prisoners throughout Japanese-occupied territory were freed.

On August 6, 25 years later, Van der Post appeared on a British television program, originally to talk about South Africa. The interview preceding Van der Post was with a Japanese doctor, a survivor of Hiroshima whose wife and children died in the blast. When Van der Post saw what was occurring, he persuaded the producer of the program to drop Africa from the agenda and to let him talk, on air, with the doctor.

He briefly told the doctor his prison camp experiences and then said that he himself was alive today because of the doctor's family sacrifices at Hiroshima. To the hundreds of thousands of Allied prisoners, the

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sacrifice of the doctor's wife and family was not in vain, he said. Van der Post closed by saluting the doctor not as a survivor of Hiroshima, but as a savior of the New Japan and a victor over the "old Japanese order."

DAVID E. CONNOR
Peoria, IL

WHEN DISCUSSING Truman's decision to use the bomb, it is also important to remember the Allied war aims with particular focus on rectifying the failures of World War I based on the lessons drawn from the ineptness of the Treaty of Versailles. Namely, we should remember the failure to achieve total victory; the failure, rooted in Wilsonian self-determination, to institute regime change; and the failure of a U.S. retreat into isolationism rather than maintaining a permanent military presence.

Versailles was a treaty simultaneously severe enough to anger the Germans but too weak to contain them. It was built on weak commitments without credibility, overseen by a League of Nations with neither the adequate force nor the necessary will to defend those commitments.

The necessity of total victory meant either a full-scale mainland invasion of Japan—which, based on the casualties at Okinawa and the Japanese will to fight to the end, meant combined casualties over a million—or the use of the atomic bomb. Second, even if the Japanese were considering surrender, as "Magic" has revealed, it would not have been unconditional, nor would Japan have accepted regime change.

Remember that even after the first bomb was dropped, the Japanese did not consider their chance of victory hopeless. It was not until after the second bomb was dropped that they agreed to an unconditional surrender.

Only through total victory were the Allies able to correct the failures of World War I, through unconditional surrender, regime change, and a permanent military presence. Use of the bomb also signaled to Japan, Germany, and the Soviets that the United States clearly and credibly was committed to using the necessary will to defend itself with adequate and overwhelming force.

If one were to believe the underlying assumption, as did many statesmen and military commanders at the time, that a mainland invasion would be too costly to maintain continued domestic support for the war effort and that the Japanese would fight to the bitter end, use of the bomb was in accord with the Allied war aim of total victory and unconditional surrender, as well as morally superior to its alternatives.

ANDREW R. MARCELLUS
Burlington, VT

RICHARD B. FRANK REPLIES: Mr. Marcellus provides a shrewd assessment of the realities of 1945 with parallels to today. FDR advocated "unconditional surrender" precisely because of the "lesson of World War I." He was determined to leave the German people with no doubt whatsoever that they had been thoroughly defeated militarily from without, not by some "stab in the back" betrayal from within.

The whole concept of total defeat of Germany also plainly fitted with the gradual erosion of restraint of the use of aerial firepower against cities in Europe that formed the key backdrop for both the use of massed incendiary attacks against Japan and later the use of the atomic bombs. Both Germany and Japan were in the grip of myths of warrior supremacy, particularly over the supposedly soft, decadent, and materialist democracies. Their absolute defeat eradicated this mythology root and branch.

JUDGE DORK?

IN "John Roberts's Other Papers" (Aug. 8), Matthew Continetti calls Judge Roberts a nerd. But a nerd is generally a person who spends too much time on abstractions related to math and science. I would call someone who reads way too many history books a "dork." Having been a nerd since fourth grade and a dork for the last 10 to 15 years, I think I know the difference.

Fortunately, Roberts's record as a dork is the "worst" flaw I can find in an otherwise excellent nominee. Perhaps if I were a "liberal" or a "dufus" (same thing, no?), I might have a different view of his record of applying the Constitution rather than concocting new laws from the bench.

DOUG HALL
South Bend, IN

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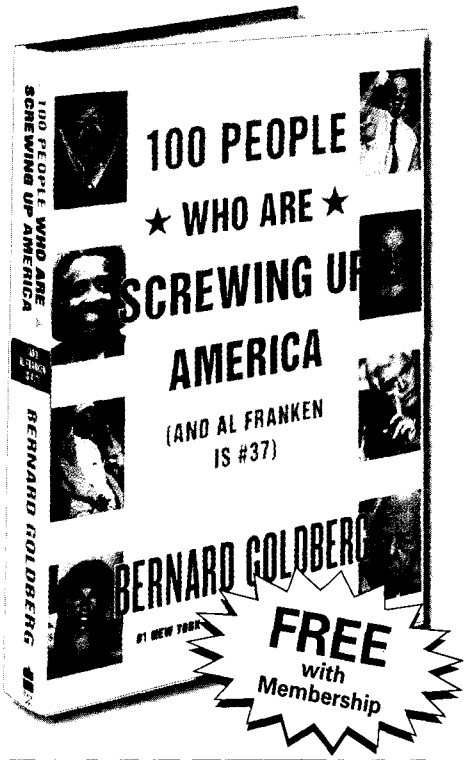
100 liberal know-it-alls who pose a threat to America

Our big problem in America, says Bernard Goldberg, is that we have become too tolerant: over the years, we've grown wonderfully broad-minded and accepting of things we should detest—like foul language in public—and close-minded about things we should revere—like standards of public decency that everyone used to accept. In *100 People Who Are Screwing Up America (and Al Franken Is #37)* Goldberg (author of the #1 *NY Times* bestseller *Bias*) fearlessly and hilariously identifies the people, famous and not-so-famous, who he believes are most responsible for our society's decline.

- ★ Hollywood blowhards who think they're smart just because they're famous—and compare Bush to Hitler while thinking that bloody dictators like Fidel Castro are cool
- ★ Culture elite hypocrites—like the Beverly Hills environmentalist-to-the-stars who screams at total strangers for driving SUV's but doesn't think twice about tooling around the country in a private jet
- ★ TV "journalists" who are so cynical and jaded that they have no idea how damaging their shameless bias, political posturing and cheap exploitation are to our country
- ★ Learned pundits who fight back tears over so-called American atrocities in Iraq and yet never seem to cry over the genuine atrocities that are commonplace in the Islamic world



The number one *New York Times* bestselling author of *Bias* delivers another bombshell—this time aimed at... *100 People Who Are Screwing Up America.*

- ★ The congresswoman who thinks hurricane names are too lily white and thinks we need more hurricanes with "black names"
- ★ America Bashers who told us, just days after 9/11, that the American flag stands for intimidation, censorship, violence, bigotry, sexism, and homophobia—that is, when it isn't standing for jingoism, vengeance and war
- ★ The intellectual thugs at some of our best universities who make rules about what you can and cannot say at school
- ★ The well-dressed corporate crooks who cook the books and steal the futures of their own employees—because ten or twenty million a year isn't enough
- ★ Liberal pols and pundits who just keep getting angrier and think they're not only smarter, but better than everyone else

Goldberg is no down-the-line conservative, and you are certain to disagree with some of his choices and rankings—and probably also with his often salty language. Nevertheless, *100 People Who Are Screwing Up America (and Al Franken is #37)* is a rollicking and revealing look at 100 of the most egregious obstacles on the path of our nation's return to glory.

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the weekly Standard

Stand with the Iraqis

On Thursday, August 11, in Crawford, Texas, President Bush met with his foreign policy team. At a press conference afterwards, he strongly reiterated the core elements of his war policy: We're engaged in a global war on terror; the central front of that war is Iraq; we're committed to winning in Iraq, and to defeating the terrorists, and their sponsors, around the world.

The president was asked about pulling U.S. troops out of Iraq. His response was unequivocal: "Pulling the troops out would send a terrible signal to the enemy. Immediate withdrawal would say to the Zarqawis of the world, and the terrorists of the world, and the bombers who take innocent life around the world, you know, the United States is weak; and all we've got to do is intimidate and they'll leave."

A week later, Vice President Cheney spoke to the 73rd National Convention of the Military Order of the Purple Heart. He, too, offered a strong defense of the core Bush administration understanding of the war on terror: "This is not a war we can win strictly on the defensive. Our only option against these enemies is to find them, to fight them, and to destroy them. . . . Iraq is a critical front in the war on terror, and victory there is critical to the future security of the United States and other free nations. We know this, and the terrorists know it as well."

One sentence, however, stood out like a sore thumb in both the president's and the vice president's remarks: "As Iraqis stand up, we'll stand down," the president said. "And over time, as Iraqi forces stand up, American forces will stand down," repeated the vice president.

Now, it is probably the case that a couple of years from now we will be able responsibly to reduce the number of American forces in Iraq. But the "stand up/stand down" formulation goes beyond that. It suggests—and Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has repeatedly elaborated on this thought—that as Iraqi soldiers get trained, they will replace Americans, apparently regardless of our progress toward victory in the war.

But this formulation—and this policy, if it becomes policy—is, to quote the president, "a terrible signal" to send to the enemy. The enemy should confront the unpleasant prospect of soon facing the current level of American forces *supplemented by* an ever-growing number of Iraqi fighters. Our enemies should not have the impression that, by continuing the terror, they can secure the reward of facing (inevitably) less-able Iraqi forces in place of American troops.

This formulation, and this policy, is also a terrible signal to send to our friends. It suggests we want to get out more than we want to win. Such a suggestion will itself make winning more difficult—for who will risk committing to a side that seems uncertain about its own commitment, and that seems to be seeking an exit from the struggle?

The right formulation, and the right policy, would be this: As Iraqis stand up, we will stand with them. This formulation is consistent with the Bush administration's general approach to the war on terror. And, as Frederick W. Kagan pointed out last week in the *Washington Post*, the policy implied by such a commitment—supplementing the current American forces with a couple hundred thousand Iraqi light infantry—would point the way to victory.

For one thing, there are areas like logistics, artillery, and airpower where Iraqi forces cannot substitute for U.S. forces. But, more important, a combined U.S.-Iraqi force doubled in size could fight a more effective and more comprehensive counterinsurgency. We could sweep areas and hold them, instead of sweeping and leaving. We could patrol areas we control—and still launch attacks in areas we don't. We could address problems on the Syrian border—and still concentrate troops in Baghdad. We could do a better job of protecting Iraq's oil infrastructure, and could provide a better security shield behind which real and lasting economic reconstruction could take place. But all of this is possible only if we stay and fight side-by-side with the Iraqis.

Kagan concludes that, in general, "Iraqis will be dependent on significant levels of U.S. military support for years to come." But the good news is that a combined Iraqi-U.S. force will be able to defeat the terrorists. Conversely, as Kagan puts it, "A decision to reduce forces based mainly on the number of Iraq light infantry available at any moment would be dangerous and unwarranted. It might well put at risk the success of U.S. efforts, and the millions of Iraqis working in perilous conditions to establish democracy in their country."

And it would put at risk victory in Iraq—*our* victory in Iraq, the central front in the war on terror—*our* war on terror. Even talking about "standing down" as the Iraqis stand up makes success more difficult. A commitment to stand *with* the Iraqis, on the other hand, offers the prospect of victory.

—*William Kristol*

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The War on Terror: Year Five

It's at a pivotal moment.

BY JEFFREY BELL AND FRANK CANNON

ON SEPTEMBER 11, the United States will observe the fourth anniversary of its entry into the war on terrorism. The war has already exceeded by a few months our entire time of involvement in World War II. It's hardly too early to take stock of what we've learned about the nature of the war and the stakes involved in its outcome.

First, this is a world war. From North America to Indonesia, with many points of impact in between, the war has drawn in dozens of nations and billions of people.

Second, the war has taken the form of a civil war in increasing numbers of countries. From the beginning its hallmark was a convulsive upheaval within the Islamic religion. In its first wave, the clash within Islam led to discord among different kinds of Muslims in such countries as Pakistan and Turkey. Recent events in the Netherlands and Britain have underlined its potential for civil violence within every non-Muslim democratic country with a sizable minority of Muslims.

Third, to a surprising degree, the war has remained fundamentally bipolar. Its two poles are the United States and the violent wing of Sunni Islam symbolized and led by Osama bin Laden and his terror vehicle, al Qaeda. At first glance this attribute may seem to contradict elements of the first two, which are about the war's global reach and multiplicity of players. But it does not.

A good analogy is to the Cold War, which from 1945 to 1991 drew in billions of people and dozens of governments, but at root was always a bipolar conflict between the United States and Soviet-style communism based in Moscow. The bipolarity of the Cold War is underlined by the fact that survival of the main Asian Communist regimes after the 1991 dissolution of the Soviet state led no one to say the Cold War was continuing.

Nonetheless, during the course of the Cold War there was no shortage of elite analysts willing to argue the reverse, or at least that world politics was getting less and less bipolar. The implication, almost always, was that hawkish leaders like Ronald Reagan were "simplistic" in their belief that undoing or neutralizing Soviet power was the key to ending the Cold War.

Similarly, from the beginning of the war on terrorism, many if not most analysts, particularly the huge portion hostile to George W. Bush and dovish on the war, have posited a multiheaded enemy that will suffer a setback on one front only to pop up on another. The implication is that our most unarguable victories (such as overthrowing the Saddam Hussein tyranny in Iraq) are exercises in futility or (worse) counterproductive provocations that enhance recruitment of anti-American terrorists all over the world. If this is true, if the enemy is so ubiquitous and diffuse, why even try for a victory?

Yet the movements and statements of our most indisputable enemies have increasingly pointed in the other direction, toward bipolarity. Organizations claiming to be branches of al Qaeda are currently fighting the United States in Iraq and our key ally, Britain, in London. Like the Madrid bombings of March 11, 2004, which ejected Spain from Iraq, the London terror bombs aim to get Britain out of Iraq and out of its strategic alliance with the United States. Thus the two chief protagonists in the war, the United States and al Qaeda, are in complete agreement that Iraq is the central front of the global war, and that getting the United States' chief ally out of Iraq would thus be an enormous coup for our enemies.

The war is what military analysts call "asymmetric." One side is the world's only superpower. The other side is not only unable to prevail in military terms, but in most situations is unwilling even to try. Hence its emphasis on mass killing of civilians as its main objective, and on suicide bombers as its most effective weapon in achieving that objective. Though President Bush has been accused of political correctness for calling the war a war on terror rather than on Islamism or Islamofascism, the Bush terminology has a certain salience: It is hard to think of a past war, particularly one on such a vast scale, where one side used terror as its main, nearly its only, effective weapon.

When terror works, it works above all as psychology. Osama bin Laden conceived his attack on the Twin Towers as a masterstroke of psychological warfare. If America could be driven out of Somalia in 1993 by mere dozens of casualties, he is known to have believed, the sudden, unexpected murder of thousands would compel us to wash our hands not just of Saudi Arabia but of the entire Arab world, the greater Middle East, and ultimately of the world of Islam altogether.

In this hope, of course, he gravely miscalculated. The United States, personified by the newly elected George W. Bush, was in no mood to retreat after 9/11. Instead, the administration concluded, we must be more proactive in the Arab world, the greater Middle East, and the larger world of Islam, than we ever dreamed of being before.

This meant, in a first phase, turn-

Jeffrey Bell and Frank Cannon are principals of Capital City Partners, a Washington consulting firm.

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ing the Musharraf regime in Pakistan toward our side and going to war to remove Afghanistan's Taliban regime, Osama's host and only overt ally among the world's governments. These happened surprisingly quickly.

In the second phase, America turned its attention to the Arab world, the homeland of all the 9/11 suicide bombers. Two entities in that almost completely dictatorial world dared to allow or foster street-level celebrations of the mass murder of Americans: Saddam Hussein's Iraq and the Palestinian Authority of Yasser Arafat. President Bush began preparations for regime change in Iraq. And he announced that the United States would no longer participate in Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts as long as Arafat was one of the two putative partners.

Bush also came to the conclusion that replacing one or two Arab dictators with new dictators would avail little. Influenced by the work of Natan Sharansky, Bush concluded that nothing less than a democratic revolution in the Arab world stood any chance of removing the roots of terrorism.

Bush has been widely ridiculed for this conclusion, particularly at moments when the U.S.-backed democratic timetable in Iraq hits bumps in the road. Brent Scowcroft and many other members of the U.S. foreign-policy elite know better, as do sophisticated Europeans like Jacques Chirac and Gerhard Schröder.

But there is one person who has never had any doubt that Bush is right, and therefore has moved heaven and earth to try to prevent democracy from getting an Iraqi foothold: Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the head of al Qaeda in Mesopotamia and the most effective general al Qaeda has found in the four years of this world war. Zarqawi's certainty on this point—the devastating effect democratization would have on the cause of Islamist terrorism—is undoubtedly a big reason al Qaeda has put so many chips—not just in Iraq itself, but in Madrid and London—on demoralizing supporters of the Bush-Blair-Sharansky strategy of promoting Arab democracy.

Born in 1966 of Palestinian exile parents in Jordan, Zarqawi had the sort of background that would until recently have presaged a career as an Arab nationalist. His desire to work with bin Laden and al Qaeda, rather than being a kind of masquerade, is one of the chief signs of growing bipolarity in the larger war. Any Arab who wants to fight the Great Satan in the world of 2005 must of necessity be (or become) an Islamist. Any secular enemy (such as the Baathist regime in Syria) that decides to intervene sends Islamist fighters across the border, not Baathist fighters.

In the second or Arab phase of the war, Washington was somewhat slower to come to terms with a simple but overwhelming fact: Virtually all of the upsurge in Sunni radicalism in recent years has been financed by Wahhabists in Saudi Arabia. Without Saudi oil money, few of the madrassas and sparkling new radical mosques springing up all over the world would exist. There are signs Saudi money is financing much of the terrorism going on in Iraq today. Somewhat slowly, yet decisively, President Bush came around to the view that democratic reform in the Arab world must include Saudi Arabia.

As the war enters its fifth year, some important inflection points will soon arrive, enough of them for the war to enter a third and perhaps even decisive phase. Because both sides in the bipolar world war believe Iraq is its central battlefield, the inflection points tend to revolve around developments there.

(a) The democratic transition in Iraq will or will not work.

(b) The United States will or will not take decisive steps to stop enemy infiltration from Syria.

(c) King Abdullah will or will not attempt serious reforms in Saudi Arabia, which will greatly affect the issue of whether . . .

(d) Saudi Wahhabist money will or will not continue funding Sunni radicalism in every form, from the madrassas to bin Laden and Zarqawi.

(e) Democratic forces in the Palestinian Authority, assuming they exist, will or will not seize on Israel's withdrawal from Gaza as an opportunity to defeat Palestinian Islamists and win the peace.

Two other factors are less easy to plot as inflection points. One is the role of Iran and the larger Shiite world in the drama of the war between the United States and Sunni radicalism. It is, for example, hard to fathom what Iran fears more: Zarqawi and his overt attempt to elevate the mass murder of Shiites to central status in al Qaeda's Iraq strategy, or the rise of a Shiite-led democratic Iraq.

Finally, there is the relationship between the conduct of the world war and the state of play in American politics. The mass murders of 9/11, much against the hopes of bin Laden, made most Americans into hawks in the first phase of the war. It is reasonable to speculate that the realization of this backfire has played a part in the lack of enemy attacks on the U.S. mainland in the four years since. After the successful January elections in Iraq, the Bush administration turned its attention in other directions, mostly domestic, at the very time when the enemy's Iraq terror achieved a peak of effective psywar.

Meanwhile, Democrats are tempted to treat Iraq as a stand-alone Bush blunder rather than the intense pressure point of a far larger conflict that in fact it is. What if the Democrats succumb to their antiwar temptation at precisely the time when the worldwide nature of the conflict again becomes clear? Would a renewed campaign of mass murder on the American mainland make people think of the failure of the Bush administration to prevent it, or of the folly of antiwar Democrats?

There is plenty of uncertainty and danger on the American side about all these issues and inflection points. The good news is that our asymmetric enemy has even more to worry about, and far less margin for new errors. ♦

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The Confirmation Ritual

Roberts has made the courtesy calls; now the fun begins. BY NEAL B. FREEMAN

Getty Images / Chip Somodevilla

JUST A FEW MORE THINGS, Judge Roberts. I don't mean to complicate your life, but let's be clear: The ride's going to get a little bumpy and you would be well advised to keep your tray in its full upright and locked position.

What kind of turbulence will you be experiencing? First, there's Mrs. Farnsworth. Don't remember her? Well, nobody else does, either. But she's out there and the FBI will find her. Sometime between now and the Judiciary Committee vote, she will get her 15 minutes of cable fame. Why? Because your falling maple tree once crushed her picket fence. Or because she swears she saw you take a third drink at the Christmas party. Or because you once had to fire her nephew the klepto. Or, who knows, because she never got over the fact that Mom liked you best.

Now I know that you have led a spotless life. You seem to have been in serious confirmation prep since you were about 15. (It seems probable that Mom did in fact like you best.) But you're up against a wounded FBI bureaucracy here. They will leave no pebble unturned in their effort to build a comprehensive file.

That's "comprehensive," by the way, as in "unimaginably intrusive." The old standby "Orwellian" doesn't quite do the job. Remember the drill. The FBI tracks down everybody who ever rubbed up against you and tells them two things—that they are legally obliged to tell the truth and, better yet, that their identity will never be revealed. What most interviewees hear the agent saying is, "Take your best shot. There's absolutely no chance of reprisal." What comes back from these free-swinging interviews is what is called a raw file. Some of it is really raw. Some of it is actually true. Some of it is phoned in from the planet Zocar. What's most important from a tactical perspective is that you have only a general idea what's in the file. But Chuck Schumer knows it by heart. All of which is to say that it's difficult for you to prepare for Mrs. Farnsworth, whose testimony will be presented by the media as deeply revealing of your inner judge.

You'll hit the second air pocket when your opponents start talking about money. And they will. Senate staffers, who don't make any money, are reliably curious about nominees who do. And, on the media side, there will always be money stories that only trained journalists are perfectly equipped to misunderstand. But there's more to the money chase than personality twitch, and my own experience may be instructive.

When I was nominated as director of the Communications Satellite Corporation, there was some industry chatter that I might be a latent supporter of privatization. The bureaucracy wasn't about to let that kind of risk go unmitigated, so they went after me. I was no John Roberts, to be sure, but I had left only slim pickings for the trash-sifters: My professional, sexual, and pharmacological habits were boringly conventional. And so it was that my Roberts-like financial holdings came under scrutiny, picked over with the diligence of a CSI unit looking for trace amounts of ricin. As the investigation intensified, my wife and I took to calling our modest, middle class stake the "vast Freeman fortune," which, according to well-placed sources, was manipulated secretively from "stately Freeman manor," as we took to calling our plain-vanilla suburban house.

When the staffers' CSI unit returned emptyhanded, they conceded that there were no conflicts embedded in my portfolio. But they kept the investigative door ajar: Said they, repeatedly and portentously, "even the appearance of a conflict could be equally important." It could not be nearly as important as an actual conflict of interest, of course, but one learns over the years not to fight rooted Beltway clichés. What I wanted was a hearing in open session and, grudgingly, they agreed to proceed.

Neal B. Freeman is chairman of the Blackwell Corporation.

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I was scheduled to be the first witness of the day, to be followed by Sharon Percy Rockefeller, who as chance would have it had been named to my old seat on the Corporation for Public Broadcasting board. As I took my place at the witness table, Sharon arrived with a small, fast-moving entourage and headed directly for the dais. As if cued by an offstage choreographer, each of the five senators present leaped to his feet, waving, grinning, singing out joyously. Sharon favored each with a vaguely aimed air kiss, and then, a bit pressed for time, agreed to take the first questions.

Of the desultory interrogation that followed, it could be said that only I appeared to be disappointed by its brevity. Deeply impressed as I was by now with the importance of financial conflicts, I was looking forward to a review of Rockefeller family finances and the revelation of any appearance problems that might possibly lurk within. Senatorial curiosity, alas, was left unexcited: There was not a single question for Mrs. Rockefeller on the subject of money. The Rockefeller family holdings, it seemed, posed none of the analytical challenges, none of the accounting complexities, that had so riddled the vast Freeman fortune.

Instead, the questions turned on the wonder of it all. How could the Republic ever hope to express its gratitude to Sharon for agreeing to serve? After five consecutive U.S. senators dwelled semi-puzzled on this point, I began to wonder myself. Perhaps it was all a bureaucratic snafu, perhaps the administration would have to improve its offer—a major ambassadorial appointment, maybe? Through the hearing room passed a warm civic frisson, and a few moments later it was all over. Amid a cascade of grateful thanks, Sharon waved to the committee members and was gone, the nation's business swiftly and surely done.

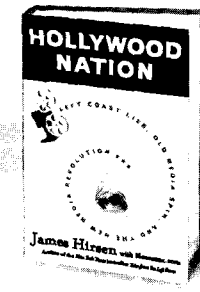
There are two lessons for you here, John. The first one is that life is unfair. But you probably have heard about that one. The other lesson is that you can never prepare enough. You may have started at 15, but there are nominees like Sharon Percy Rockefeller, the daughter of a Republican senator and the wife of a Democratic senator, who started before she was born.

Not to worry, John. You'll be arriving home safely and almost on schedule. Even Chuck Schumer will be hard-pressed to sell the story that you're outside the mainstream. You will savor confirmation in your own way, but let me recommend one from my own experience. Using FOIA, and outlasting bureaucratic resistance, my wife once got me the ultimate Christmas present—a copy of my FBI file. (It was excerpted and redacted, of course, but not entirely. When the file noted that, "BLANK BLANK, a partner in a Boston engineering firm, reports that he did business with the subject between 1979 and 1983 . . ." the Bureau's anonymous source is fully protected from prying eyes. But as I had not been two-timing Boston engineers in those days, I had little problem figuring out who BLANK BLANK was.)

The file makes for fascinating reading—what do people say about you under oath, after receiving assurances that their words will never reach your ears? Yes, it's true that memories fade at the edges and perspectives shift and spin happens. But when asked by the FBI to tell it straight, almost everybody does so. For our fragile democracy, it seems to me, that is big news. Our civil society relies for its survival on the honor system, and at least in this controlled mini-study our citizens passed with colors flying.

And, who knows, you may come upon a pleasant surprise. I did. In the standard FBI interview, after the agent has asked all of his precooked questions, he poses the omnium gatherum, "Is the subject likely to do anything to embarrass the administration"? Most interviewees content themselves with a declarative, "No." One source, when asked if I would embarrass the administration, responded: "I should think that the reverse is much more likely." The same goes for you, John. ♦

Always Be Right



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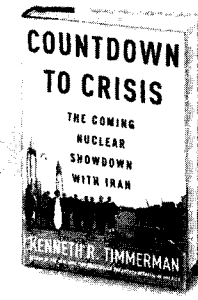

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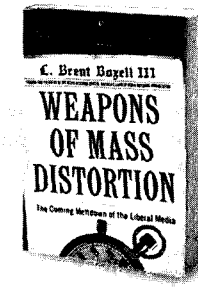

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Three Cheers for the Syrians

We're talking about the ones who just left the National Council of Churches. BY MARK D. TOOLEY

LAST MONTH, for the first time in years, a member denomination withdrew from the National Council of Churches (NCC). The spunky, 400,000-member communion is the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, and its decision to quit the reflexively left-wing NCC was based on a unanimous vote of clergy and lay delegates.

According to one church spokesman, a recent NCC fundraising letter helped spark the departure. It asked supporters to fight "right-wing attacks" on the controversial church agency. The letter named President Bush, Rush Limbaugh, James Dobson, and the Heritage Foundation as insidious forces that must be opposed.

"It got to be too much," Antiochian spokesman Rev. Thomas Zain told *Ecumenical News International*. The NCC, said Zain, has "lost its goal of Christian unity on a doctrinal basis. The goal seems to be including everybody and [promoting] niceties."

Homosexuality, increasingly the bellwether issue that divides religious traditionalists from liberals, was also a big factor for the Antiochians. The Episcopal Church and United Church of Christ, both pillars of the NCC, have largely accepted same-sex unions and openly gay clergy.

Officially, the NCC does not have a stance on homosexuality. But NCC chief Bob Edgar, a former Democratic congressman and liberal Methodist seminary president, leaves little doubt that he favors same-sex unions. "We just feel we don't have much in common with the churches" in the NCC, said Rev. Zain on behalf of the Antiochians.

Historically comprising mostly Syrian-American Christians, the Antiochians have in recent years attracted a number of Protestant converts impressed by the history and mysticism of Eastern Orthodoxy. These newcomers are especially anxious not to follow the liberal path of mainline denominations.

The NCC's preference for liberal politics, and its indifference to Christian doctrine, have made it unappealing to the Eastern Orthodox for some time. Mainline Protestants founded and dominate the 55-year-old NCC. The Orthodox originally saw the group as an avenue for integrating their ethnic communions into America's religious mainstream. But the mainline is no longer mainstream. Only about a quarter of America's church members belong to NCC denominations now, as Methodists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians shrink in numbers, and conservative churches grow.

The NCC's relations with its own more conservative churches have been increasingly cool for several years. When the NCC nearly went bankrupt in the late 1990s, the wealthy Orthodox churches—the Russian, Greek, Serbian, and Ukrainian, along with other Eastern communions like the Armenians and Copts—declined to come to the rescue in any significant way. Although NCC members from nearly the beginning (the Antiochians were a founding NCC member), the Orthodox churches provide almost no funding to the NCC. Most of its denominational support comes from United Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians.

The mainline Protestants bailed out the NCC and installed Edgar as the new general secretary six years ago, hoping he could work fundraising magic. Although the NCC's income has fallen from over $10 million to $6 million, Edgar erased the deficit-spending that was choking the NCC.

Aware that the denominations would provide no more financial rescues, Edgar changed the NCC's system of financial support. Instead of depending on the churches, the NCC is increasingly funded by left-wing philanthropies, like the Tides Foundation and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and political advocacy groups, like the Sierra Club and MoveOn.org.

From the start, Edgar also stressed outreach to non-NCC constituencies, such as Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, and Pentecostals, groups that, unlike the NCC churches, are actually growing. But the outreach stumbled five years ago when Edgar quickly withdrew his signature from an ecumenical "Christian Marriage Declaration," which defined marriage as the union of one man and one woman, and which was endorsed by the Roman Catholic bishops and the National Association of Evangelicals.

Under pressure from the NCC's gay caucus, Edgar explained, "I support more than marriage the love between two people, and I don't differentiate whether it is between a man and a woman or a woman and a woman or a man and a man or whatever."

Edgar's backflip on marriage was not forgotten by the Eastern Orthodox and was among the reasons for the Antiochian decision. The delegates cheered as the hierarch of the church, Metropolitan Philip Saliba,

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announced withdrawal from the NCC.

"It's the liberalization of the mainline Protestant denominations over the last several years," explained the Antiochian interfaith affairs spokesman Rev. Olof Scott to a radio interviewer. "Their agendas are driven by gay issues, the radical feminist agenda, same-sex marriage. They compromise so much. Our voice has been totally lost."

Scott complained that the NCC under Bob Edgar has adopted a "politicized agenda" that "we feel should not be part of the proclamation of the church." Edgar's "liberal-left agenda" doesn't appeal to "people who live in flyover country who are conservative Christians," noted Scott, who called the NCC's latest fundraising letter the "straw that broke the camel's back." The letter, although sent to churches, says little about Christianity and a lot about fighting the "right."

With the NCC increasingly reliant on liberal foundations and direct-mail campaigns for funding, Edgar is unlikely to let up on the shrill political rhetoric. Meanwhile, the Antiochian withdrawal could have a ripple effect on other Orthodox churches in the NCC.

The 1 million-member Orthodox Church in America (Russian Orthodox) convened its All American Council last month in Toronto, where it received a proposal to withdraw from the NCC. "The very politically-oriented theologies of many Protestant denominations have often threatened to derail the agenda of the councils away from dialogue and unity, and towards political advocacy and activism," said the report from the church's ecumenical affairs committee. Bishops of the church will deliberate over the proposal this fall.

"We don't need the NCC," the Antiochian Church's Rev. Scott told a radio interviewer. "We are strong. We are vibrant. We are growing." That is considerably more than Bob Edgar can say about the troubled NCC and its declining mainline members. ♦

The King Who Would Be Reformer

Is there a silver lining behind the new Saud?

BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

On August 2, Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz, a man in his early 80s, ascended the throne of Saudi Arabia—and all hopes for reform in the Saudi kingdom began to be put to the test.

For years, Saudi dissidents had speculated that Abdullah alone among the sons of Ibn Saud (1880-1953), founder of the kingdom, understood the dangers to Arabian society represented by Wahhabism, the extreme Islamic sect that Ibn Saud made the state religion. No tyranny lasts forever, and it was inevitable that economic and social development in the peninsula would undermine the alliance, based on intermarriage, of the governing House of Saud and the House of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, responsible for ideology and religion.

Popular opinion had it that one of Abdullah's four wives (out of some 30 he has married over the years) was Syrian, cosmopolitan, and had influenced him to tolerate Islamic and other intellectual unorthodoxy. It was further said that Abdullah encouraged the private practice of Sufism, or Islamic spirituality, and various traditional Islamic customs rigorously suppressed since the Wahhabi takeover in the 1920s. One forbidden observance—common among Muslims from West Africa to Indonesia—is the commemoration of the birthday of Muhammad, which the Wahhabis and Saudis reject on the ground that it resembles the Christian celebration of Jesus' birth.

Stephen Schwartz is the author of The Two Faces of Islam: Saudi Fundamentalism and Its Role in Terrorism.

Late last year when he was still only crown prince, Abdullah lent credence to speculation about his sympathies when he appeared at the funeral of Seyed Mohammad Alawi Al-Maliki, a non-Wahhabi cleric and leading Sufi teacher. Al-Maliki, before his death, had been a prominent victim of Saudi repression; yet Abdullah praised him for his religious and patriotic fervor.

But aside from his reputed interest in Sufi mysticism, Abdullah had other incentives to follow a different road than that of his predecessor, King Fahd, and of Fahd's powerful brothers, Princes Sultan and Nayef. As Saudi defense minister, Sultan personally enriched himself on military contracts with the United States, and Nayef, the interior minister and an extreme Wahhabi, was the first leading figure in the kingdom to blame the atrocities of September 11, 2001, on Zionism. Fahd, Sultan, and Nayef were all members of the "Sudairi Seven," born of old Ibn Saud's favorite wife, Hussah bint Sudair. Abdullah, their half-brother, was outside the Sudairi circle.

All these men, admittedly, are old. Nevertheless, Abdullah may have just the necessary window to begin a transition to normality for his country, from its present standing as the richest but most backward ideological state in the world, a kind of Middle Eastern North Korea or Cuba.

Abdullah lent encouragement to those seeking reform only a week into his reign, when he ordered pardons for three liberal dissidents who had been framed for allegedly seeking to overthrow the monarchy. The trio, Drs. Abdullah Al-Hamed and

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Matrook Al-Faleh and the poet Ali Al-Domaini, were sentenced to six to nine years' imprisonment in mid-May. Their real offense was to have circulated a petition calling for a written constitution, in a state whose only basis for governance has always been the Wahhabi interpretation of the Koran.

Western observers have joined Arab and other Muslim Saudi-watchers in seeking to read the signs coming out of the kingdom. Some note that pardoning political prisoners is an old royal custom on taking control, and dismiss the release of the three dissidents as perfunctory. And recent religious pronouncements have also been subjected to analysis. One fascinating example is a series of citations from writings and interviews given by Sheikh Abd Al-Muhsin Al-Abikan, a leading state cleric, translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) and accessible on its website.

A religious conservative, Al-Abikan has recently delivered himself of commentaries that are not unknown in the broader Islamic world, but which have previously lacked real support from the Saudi/Wahhabi ruling class. He asserts, for example, that there is no basis for jihad in Iraq; that Sunni terrorists in Iraq are using resistance to occupation as a pretext for corruption and the abuse of women; that suicide terrorism is a crime against civilians; and that the al Qaeda terror offensive has been a catastrophe for the world's Muslims. In his most arresting comment, he says that Arabs began the war with Israel and that Israel established peace in the areas it occupied. He also repeatedly declared his willingness to confront bin Laden or any of his supporters, and called on the terrorist chief to surrender and repent. (This is, after all, a man of religion, not a government official or antiterrorist investigator, speaking.)

Dealing with another central issue little understood by non-Muslims, Al-Abikan called for banning the practice of *takfir*, the excommunication of nonextremists from Islam. The significance of this is potentially immense. The Wahhabis and other radicals have, for centuries, declared that those who do not share their fanatical doctrines are apostates from Islam. This has been their excuse for murder and pillage against Shias and non-Wahhabi Sunnis. And it is important for another reason.

By labeling all nonradicals apostates from the religion, and blessing as the only faithful Muslims the adherents of their own violent ideology, the practitioners of *takfir* bind their followers together as an elite, but also as a pliable human mass, convinced their brutal urges are sacred and worthy. Many if not most Muslim terrorist recruits are weak in their religious belief and knowledge, and the power they assume by expelling a billion people from the religion fills the intellectual and spiritual void within them.

The Wahhabis and other radicals have, for centuries, declared that those who do not share their fanatical doctrines are apostates from Islam.

Takfir has always been a principle of Saudi rule and Wahhabi preaching. If, as some Saudi subjects think, Abdullah is inclined to end the practice, the formal authority of the religious radicals will be instantly abolished. A movement against *takfir* has taken hold elsewhere in Sunni Islam, in which many clerics now appear deeply repelled by the horrific events in Iraq. In July, an international Islamic conference in Jordan produced a statement opposing the Sunni use of *takfir* against Shias, a practice enunciated time and again in the bloodthirsty manifestos of Abu Musab al Zarqawi, as well as condemning *takfir* against Sufis. The Amman declaration called for the restoration of pluralistic debate in Islam, banned in Mecca and Medina by the Wahhabis, and for the affirmation of liberty as a principle.

What next? Will Abdullah seize the initiative and do away with the ideological state over which he has been handed rule? If the new Saudi king is to carry out a rational transition to popular sovereignty—to a written constitution, parliamentary government, a free press, an independent and modernized judiciary, and broad religious freedom—he must find a way to assert authority over, or otherwise neutralize, Sultan and Nayef. He must then, step by step, bring the kingdom into the contemporary world, borrowing positive experiences from other Muslim nations, including, in the first instance, Turkey and Malaysia.

Such a process does not require violence, much less the overthrow of the monarchy. There is no reason that, at least for now, the House of Saud cannot, like the House of Windsor in Britain, retain its wealth and even its status as heads of state. But their direct governance of the country according to Wahhabi prejudices must end.

And what should the United States do? First, consolidate popular government in Iraq, and indicate that there will be no retreat from that commitment. Second, continue demanding from Abdullah a full accounting of Saudi involvement in terrorism, and the arrest of the al Qaeda founders who continue prancing around the kingdom with impunity. Third, proclaim our right to assist and even help finance the blooming of civil society in Saudi Arabia, a country with a large middle class, access to the Internet and satellite media, . . . and a ban on women's driving.

Under Abdullah, a Saudi transition could be as easy as those seen in the last 15 years in countries as diverse as Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, South Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia (the largest Muslim country on earth), Mexico, Chile, and Ukraine. The time has come for the Wahhabi dictatorship to be dismantled and for the people of the Arabian peninsula to join the rest of the world. ♦

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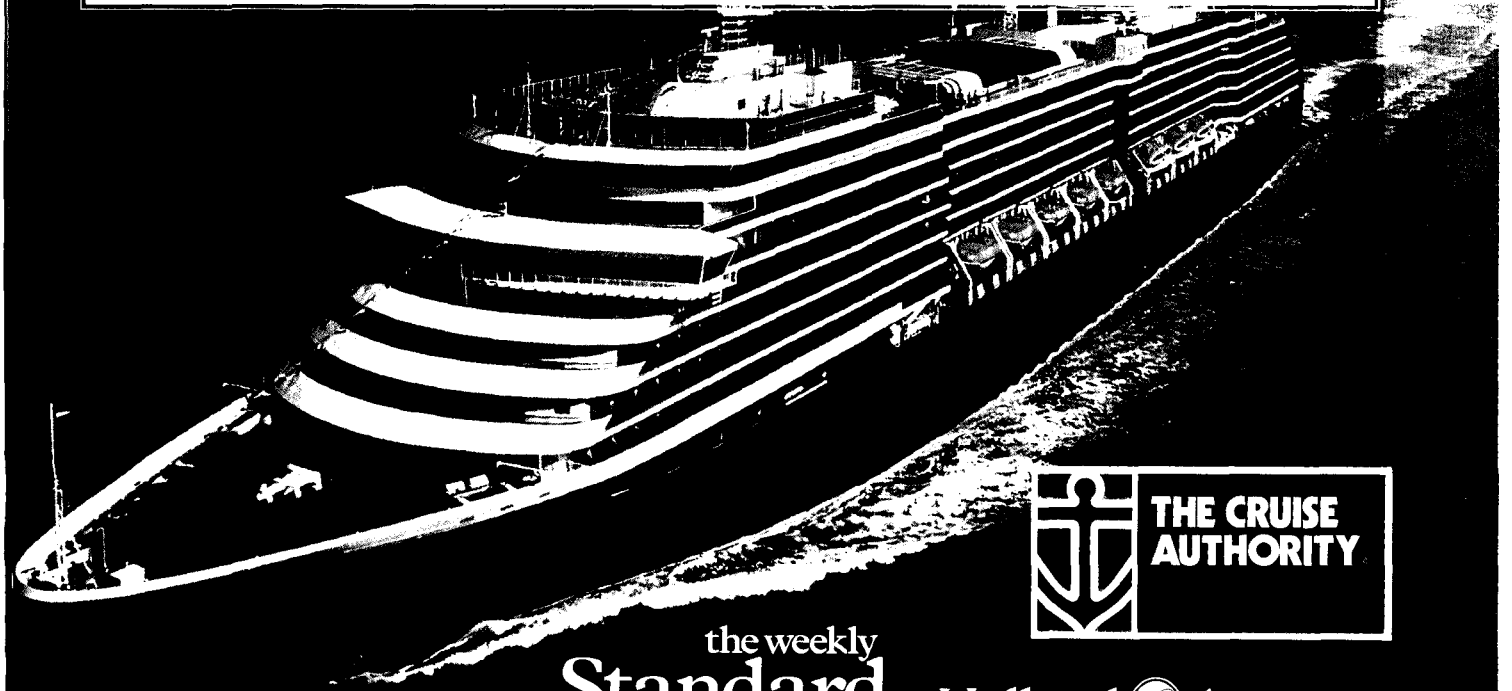

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North of the Border

With the Minutemen in Arizona, New Mexico, and points south.

By Matt Labash

Tombstone, Arizona

They don't teach it in journalism school, but that doesn't make it any less true: If you're going to go native with a subject, you need proper headwear. Such was my object, standing at the hat-rack of the Quik Pic convenience store between Tucson and Tombstone where I'd stopped en route to visit the Minutemen, the rag-tag band of private citizens determined to end illegal immigration in spite of government apathy.

The loosely organized, all-volunteer Minutemen have captured headlines and imaginations since their month-long stand on the Arizona/Mexican border in April. Make that their month-long sit, since much of their activity requires taking a load off in their best lawn chairs. They plant themselves on the border in everything from those old metal-tube jobs with vinyl webbing to the Wilderness Recliner™ with durable padded seat and insulated beverage holder, there to serve as reporting agents and visible deterrents against the gusher of illegal aliens our government seems unable, or unwilling, to stop. Their very logo is an advertisement for proactive passivity. It depicts a Revolutionary-era Minuteman holding a cell phone and binoculars, as opposed to the more forthright musket.

Even in school plays, however, I could never pull off the tricorn hat. It made my face look angular. And with the Sonora Desert sun hot enough to tan you through your clothes and turn your ear cartilage into crispy rinds, picking the appropriate lid warranted careful weighing of the evidence.

Some proponents cast these lawn-chair warriors, whose median age is near 60, as devout patriots conducting a high-stakes neighborhood watch, the "neighborhood" consisting of our lawless 1,900-mile southern border, large parts of which aren't even marked, let alone fenced. The Minutemen, they say, are just as likely to offer sun-baked illegals life-sustaining water as they are to hit speed-dial on their cell phones, ratting them out to the U.S. Border Patrol, which gives them an air-conditioned escort back to Mexico. According to boosters, they are watchdogs and humanitarians, having over the last three years rescued some 160 aliens who'd nearly perished in the desert.

It would seem, then, I couldn't go wrong with a straw grape-picker's hat in the Steinbeck mode. It sits atop the crown as a testament to American solidarity with oppressed-peoples-of-the-world. Made in China, probably in a sweatshop, it was a real steal at $2.50.

On the other hand, there are the Minutemen's legions of detractors. Mexican president Vicente Fox called them "migrant hunters," while George W. Bush denounced them as "vigilantes." The Minutemen do tote guns (though they encourage their ranks to secure concealed-weapon permits, the better, organizers say, to put the government to work weeding out potential wackos through criminal background checks). Yet the entire month of April, the heaviest thing that went down was the censuring of a new volunteer who gave a weary illegal water and Wheaties (along with 20 bucks), then photographed him wearing a T-shirt that said "Bryan Barton Caught Me Crossing the Border And All I Got Was This Lousy T-Shirt." Barton was summarily dismissed.

Whatever policing of their ranks they'd done, the Minutemen had been macheted in the press. Every sour-tempered hack and alternative-weekly assassin had turned up to call them extremists and xenophobes and depict them as backwoods mouth-breathers, just as happy to hunt Mexicans as to loll on the redwood decks of their double-wides. They were dismissed as "red-faced pudge-tubs in full camo," and their campaign disparaged as "Granddad's Last Stand." Journalists had it both ways, hinting at impending violence, then being dismissive when it didn't materialize: "These Minutemen are to real vigilantes . . . what the Disney Jungle Boat Ride is to Amazon exploration," sniffed one scribe.

It was a confusing picture. Often portrayed as feckless rather than cautiously law-abiding, the Minutemen still came off in the media as some sort of super-spawn of Bernhard Goetz and the Michigan militia circa 1995. So back at the hat rack, having not yet met a single Minute-

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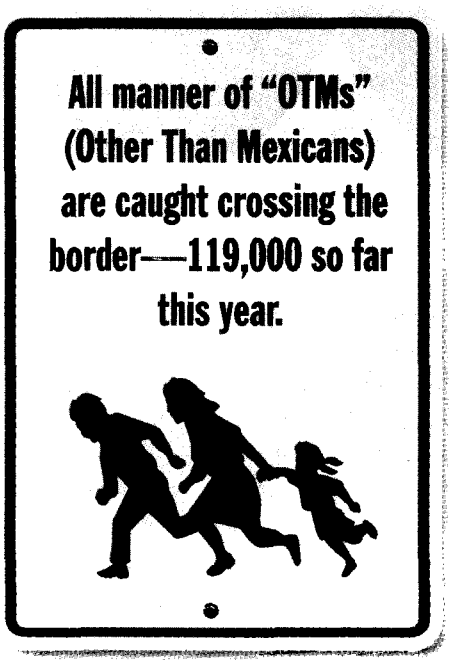
man, I doubled down, selecting a black, militia-style "Try-to-Burn-This-Flag" Stars'n'Bars number. Just to be safe.

Tombstone is a town that was carved out of Apache country. The prospector who named it, claiming that he traveled among the fierce Indians in the surrounding hills to "collect rocks," was warned that if he persisted in his folly the only rock he'd find was a tombstone. The town was welcoming that way.

Its Boothill Graveyard boasts of the gentle ends met by its inhabitants: struck in the head with fire pokers, stoned to death by Apaches, skulls crushed under wagon wheels. Nearly going tits-up after a mining bust, Tombstone was repackaged as a tourist trap, feeding off past glories such as Wyatt Earp's Gunfight at the OK Corral. The gunfights that still break out with regularity in its streets are fought with blanks by reenactors. In fact, before meeting Chris Simcox, the Minuteman leader and co-founder who doubles as the town's newspaper owner/editor, I make an afternoon of surveying these tourist wranglers, who, like the nation, seem divided on whether the Minutemen are a force for good or ill.

Outside the dust-caked OK Corral, a reenactor called "Ol' Joe" applauds the Minutemen's efforts since they help "keep illegals out," though he also calls them "bad" because they "keep the illegals from doing work us white guys don't want to do"--things like picking lettuce and busing tables, as opposed to pumping lead into the gentleman who plays Billy Clanton.



Over at the Helldorado Town gunfight theater, I spy a photograph of actor Bad Bob Waco, whose shaved head looks like a damaged baseball with its seams and stitches. The new, improved Bad Bob, in a black hat and red sash like the ones the Earps' cowboy nemeses used to wear, pulls a pre-show Dr. Pepper out of the cooler. He explains that the photo is of him after he did a "flip-off" from a second story and missed the mattress during a show. "Hit my head off the concrete," he says, knocking it with his fingers. "Now it's a metal plate."

"I reckon they're all right. I didn't think there was gonna be trouble like people thought there was," says Bad Bob, and his office manager Vikki, dressed in moccasins and a Geronimo shirt, concurs. Vikki details how Tombstone's been adversely affected by illegal traffic: how the migrants hide in the washes outside of town, littering them with drug needles and plastic Circle K bags. They bust pipes, pollute the water supply, break into houses, and cut down fences. The Minutemen's efforts mark the first time she's seen alien traffic go down in forever (rates of illegal entry were estimated to drop by as much as 50 percent along the 20-mile stretch of border that the several hundred Minutemen patrolled). Somebody needed to do something to bring attention to the issue, she says. Washington certainly wasn't paying any.

But a white-haired "No Toes Blake," who wears a marshal's badge, takes a less charitable view of Simcox and Co. Though he likes Simcox and used to work with him when Simcox was a "goofy sidekick" in the Helldorado show before taking over the paper, Blake doesn't buy his strategy. "If you wanna change something," Blake says, "you should vote the right people in. We don't need vigilantes around here." (He would say that. He's a law dog.)

Another Miss-Kitty type employee expresses the same concern as plenty in the tourist sector, fearful that their gunfights might be interrupted by actual bullets. She says Chris Simcox is just like all the other eccentric end-of-the-liners that the town attracts, putting her in mind of the drifter who thinks he really is Doc Holliday, down to the tubercular cough. She says Simcox is "really not liked around here. He carries a gun everywhere, and for good reason."

While Simcox is revered by plenty-- including the Russian immigrant waitress who serves me a buffalo burger at the OK Café- -he doesn't dispute that he has to look over his shoulder. He wears a bullet-proof vest most places and takes a coterie of heat-packing volunteers he sometimes calls "bodyguards" with him to speaking engagements. Many of them are retired military or law enforcement. Death threats have come from open-border types on both sides of the line, and he's been fired at by drug smugglers while on patrol. When I suggest we go out for dinner, he declines, saying he doesn't eat in restaurants since someone might poison him. He's joking. But when I ask to go to his house to take some notes on it, his good humor fades. "Nobody sees my house. I don't want you to know where I live."

Instead, I catch up with him at the joint office of the *Tombstone Tumbleweed*/Minuteman Civil Defense Corps,

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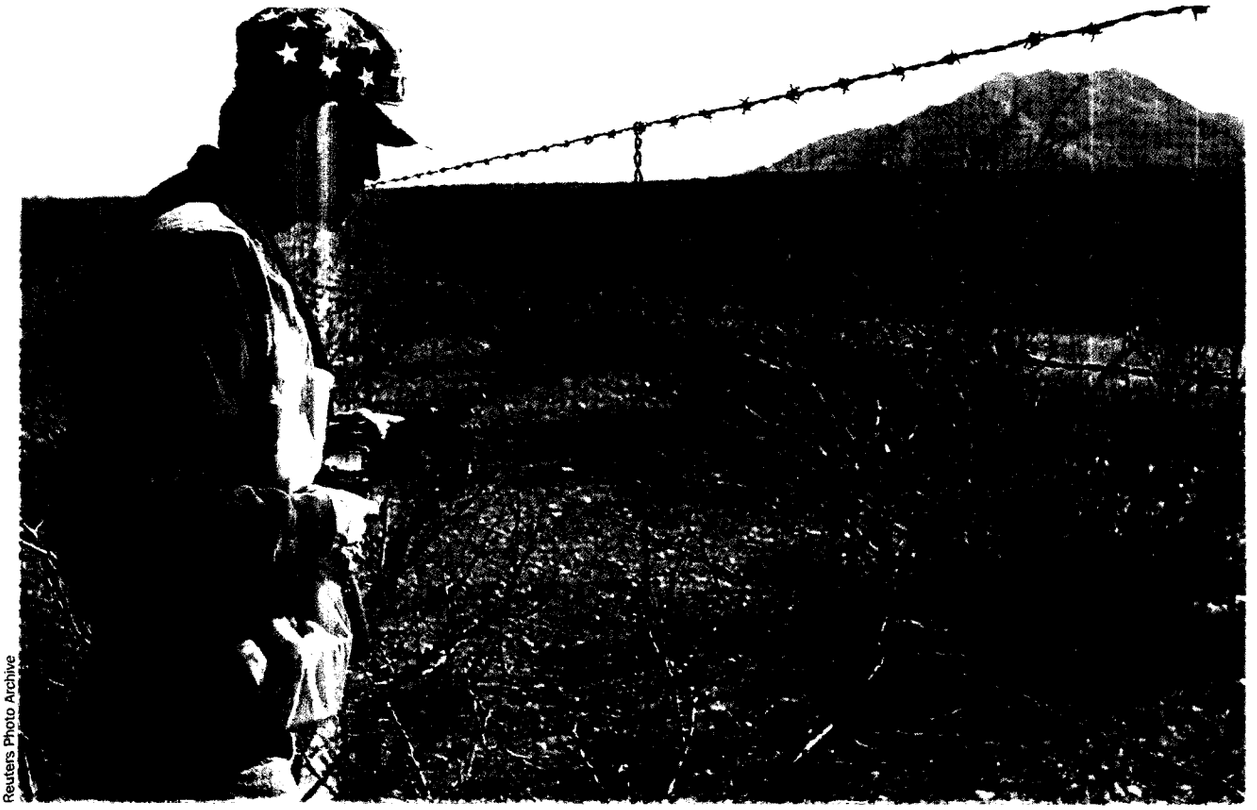

Reuters Photo Archive

Chris Simcox, leader of the Minutemen, looks across the fence into Mexico.

a fall-down frathouse-style adobe structure on Toughnut Street. Here, Simcox does everything from edit and write stories on lifeguard shortages, arts-and-crafts fairs, and immigration abuses (his favorite topic) to answer phones and sweep the floors. His paper enjoys something close to 100 percent penetration, but the town's only got 1,500 people. Apart from some stringers, he's close to a one-man band.

Simcox, 44, is boyish, with the wiry athletic build of a professional shortstop, which he dreamed of becoming after being drafted by the Cincinnati Reds and before washing out when a tumor was found in his lung. (He lost part of his lung, but is healthy now.) When the often stubbled Simcox is clean-shaven, he looks like Jimmy Olsen. But unlike the cub reporter, he showily puffs Macanudos as though he'd read about it being protocol in the Newspaper Publisher's Handbook. When I arrive, he's on the phone with a Houston radio show, putting out fires after a report that the Minutemen are coming to Texas. Many local pundits and political types are aghast. "The sky is falling," he says to me mockingly, exhaling a cloud of cigar smoke while on hold.

They'd better get used to it. Since the Minutemen's Arizona campaign dominated front pages in April, and a similar month-long stint in every state along the Mexican border was announced for October, eager volunteers have been hitting Simcox up to open chapters everywhere—in scores of inland states and every border state except Maine. Even Canadians, our lethargic neighbors to the north, want in on the action.

It seems the Minutemen are surfing a tidal wave of dissatisfaction. As a recent CNN poll confirmed, 96 percent of respondents felt illegal immigration should be a major issue in next year's election, perhaps because some three million aliens made it in last year, mostly through Mexico. Estimates of how many illegals our Border Patrol manages to intercept range from one in three to one in twenty. So it's small wonder that even unlikely politicians—such as Hillary Clinton and New Mexico governor Bill Richardson, who just declared a state of emergency in four border counties and who's requested a meeting with Simcox—are making border security the new black.

The headquarters scene is less hectic than it was in April, when 800 or so volunteers from around the country flocked to Tombstone, each with a couple of reporters in a back-pocket. Today, it's just me and a Belgian documentary crew making in-person demands on his time. But the phone brings a nonstop string of requests from talk-radio hosts, supplicants, and aspiring franchisees. Some don't bother seeking Simcox's imprimatur: There are now enough copycat organizations that even the splinter groups have splinters.

While Simcox gets held over on the phone by a greedy talk-show host, I make the acquaintance of the headquarters staff. They aren't exactly the nest of racist snipers and vipers I've been reading about on the plane. As I brush past

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Simcox's husky-lab mix lounging on the floor (he found the dog on the border while patrolling), I meet Lucy Garza, his able assistant who doubles as a screener. If Lucy hears any aspiring Minutemen disparaging Hispanics (a naturalized citizen, she's 100 percent Mexican), they are shown the door, although Lucy herself, when it comes to illegal immigration, is a bit of a fire-breather. "They come over. They reap all the benefits. They rape our country, our system, and they send all the money back home," she says, tearing up as she describes how the deserts are ravaged by waste. "It makes me ashamed of my heritage."

In a back room of the newspaper, under a "Homeland Security" poster that depicts the bumbling Beverly Hillbillies, sit a pair of mild-mannered husband-and-wife retirees named Jack and Brenda. Jack wears an earring and sandals. Brenda snacks from a Kirkland Fruit & Nut medley bag while logging phone calls from concerned citizens. She is so meek that she allows me to mistakenly call her "Betty" for 15 minutes before finally correcting me. "We're not a bunch of militiamen," says Jack, stating the obvious.

Attracted to the cause, the couple arrived in Tombstone in their RV last May and expect to stay through the October campaign. Like many Minutemen and Minutewomen, they are hard to place politically and seem pretty moderate across the board. Unlike many militia types, they don't count black helicopters in their sleep. In fact, they're not actually antigovernment at all, in the sense of wanting there to be less of it. Rather, as Simcox says, "We must force our government to do their job by threatening to do it for them." As some of their T-shirts attest, they're not vigilantes, they're undocumented Border Patrol agents.

I ask Jack what possesses a man to while away 10 or 12 hours of his day for free in what many have regarded as a hopeless cause, and he responds with a long list of grievances. When he gets a full head of steam, his "s"s tend to whistle. Having once worked for a "little bitty company called Xerox" that moved jobs to Mexico, he resents illegal aliens for depressing wages for the working class and for failing to assimilate. When he was in the Army and traveled anywhere for longer than two weeks, he'd at least make an attempt to pick up the language. He resents illegals' demanding rights they shouldn't have. (In Iowa recently, hundreds of them openly demonstrated to be issued driver's licenses, and no one was arrested.) "An illegal has more rights than I've got. Plus, the ACLU will defend him, they won't defend me," grouses Jack. In fact, when the Southern New Mexico chapter of the ACLU was found to have a board member who'd joined the Minutemen, the state director suspended the whole chapter.

Jack is sick of all the shoulder-shrugging capitulation. He's tired of his bank accepting *matricula* cards, issued by the Mexican consulate, so that undocumented immigrants can get home loans (no federal law prohibits it). He's tired of illegals' being "treated as super-citizens—free medical care, food stamps, housing assistance, paid schooling in their own language, everything immediately. Americans don't have universal health care. If you're not among the richest or poorest, you don't get it. The middle class is S.O.L." (s— out of luck).

His kettle on full-whistle now, Jack adds blackly, "I used to live in the greatest country in the world!"

Brenda shakes her head, indicating her husband's gone too far. "You still do. You live with me!"

But Brenda, too, feels the bite every day. She logs calls in her color-coded notebook, talking irate border-inhabitants off a ledge, frustrated beyond comprehension at the lapses in security. Sometimes they just need an understanding ear.

Simcox himself is quick to point out that Mexicans and other illegal immigrants are forced by hardship to pursue this course, and are as victimized by their corrupt governments as we are ignored by ours. "We don't blame the people coming across," he says, "I don't blame the victims. Man, I'd be doing the same thing. Actually, I'd be leading the revolution in Mexico." So I ask Brenda how she can begrudge these people a better existence, even if they're gaming our system, when she won the lottery by being born in America.

Brenda, who is Cherokee Indian, makes a distinction I hear repeatedly from the Minutepeople: that unlike many other groups of their stripe, they are not anti-immigration, they are anti-*illegal*-immigration. They even support increased legal immigration from Mexico and a beefed-up guest worker program, fully funded by the employers who elect to exploit cheap labor at the expense of Americans. In reassuring tones, Brenda frames it thus: "Everybody is thirsty. They're standing in line down the sidewalk to drink at the water fountain." The people she objects to, she says, are those cutting across the grass. "I don't care who I stand in line with, but everybody ought to stand in line."

Grandmotherly Brenda doesn't seem the type who'd be itching to dive into activism's mosh pit, but her breed is multiplying. Mostly, this is because whether one's reasons for concern about illegal immigration are economic, cultural, or related to national security, anyone who's bothered to examine the subject for a second knows that "border security" is an oxymoron on a par with "Senate intelligence" and "vegetarian meatball."

There are only 2,000 Border Patrol agents out along the vast Mexican border at any time, and they are not only undermanned but often outgunned. Attacks on them are at record highs—around 200 in the Tucson Sector so far this year, according to Border Patrol.

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They are increasingly shot at like tin clowns being plinked by high-school hooligans with carnival-booth air rifles—except that it's hot lead flying from smugglers who move aliens and drugs and, in an increasingly common twofer, aliens hauling drugs as their fee for passage.

Not helpful is a negligent President Bush, forever singing the song of homeland vigilance, but providing only 210 additional Border Patrol agents when Congress called for 2,000. All manner of "OTMs" (Other Than Mexicans) are caught crossing the border—119,000 so far this year. Many are released on our home turf with a "notice to appear" for their deportation hearing. (Since last October, 70,624 have been released, including 50 from "special interest" nations, according to Border Patrol.) Many of these OTMs—98 percent in one Texas district—can't be bothered to show up for their hearing, since by the time the special day rolls around they are putting up your siding or driving your cab. They may even be committing crimes. Of the nearly 400,000 absconders who've avoided deportation, roughly 80,000 are convicted criminals, reported *Time* magazine. And according to the Center for Immigration Studies, illegal aliens make up at least 17 percent of the federal prison population. Says Simcox, "I thought we had enough child molesters and thieves of our own."

Also problematic are business-appeasing politicians, more concerned about providing generous amnesty packages for illegals already here than they are about shutting down the border. Simcox's co-founder, Jim Gilchrist, a retired California accountant, has turned his side of the Minuteman franchise into a pressure group targeting employers who hire illegals. Simcox is hoping Gilchrist is successful in taking down a captain of industry. "One high-profile perp walk," he says, would give the law some teeth again.

Judicial Watch recently uncovered a suppressed Border Patrol poll of illegals, conducted at the behest of the administration. It found Bush's "temporary guest worker" proposal, which aliens interpreted as a broad amnesty, had inspired 45 percent of them to cross illegally.

Lapses have become so flagrant that Rep. Tom Tancredo, a Colorado Republican and huge Minuteman supporter, features a regularly updated outrage-du-jour on his website entitled "Would you believe!" Sometimes anecdotal, sometimes empirical, these affronts fuel the passion of border-watchers.

Egregious incidents abound. From this year alone, there was: the Mexican government printing instructional comic-books on how best to cross the border; the Bahamian native who should've been deported but instead raped an eight-year-old girl and left her for dead in a trash container; the 16 foreign-born construction workers with fake documents who were hired to work at a nuclear weapons plant in Tennessee; the illegal aliens who broke into Rep. Jim Kolbe's Arizona house in his absence, treating it like a Motel 6 by showering, microwaving dinner, and changing into his clothes before checking out. It's all become such a joke that illegals, now that they've beaten the Border Patrol, have even decided to join them: One man, born in Tijuana, who used fake documents to sign up was just apprehended for smuggling illegals in his Border Patrol vehicle.

The numbers are just as galling. While Americans celebrate our cheap produce and cut-rate lawn service, the Center for Immigration Studies estimates that illegal immigration costs U.S. taxpayers $2,700 annually per illegal household. That's not including the thousands of American workers that illegals displace every year. As some watchdogs, including Simcox, point out, building a Texas-to-California border wall like the one around the West Bank is largely dismissed as chimerical. But if it were built, the estimated tab of $2 billion to $8 billion would still be considerably less than the $20 billion we pay annually in social services for illegals.

If guys like Chris Simcox seem a bit tightly wound about our border being in crisis, it's because he lives there, and it is. This he demonstrates by taking me out one night on patrol in the Huachuca Mountains and San Pedro River Valley. With us are a few Minutemen and one Minutewoman, Carmen Mercer, who's originally from Germany and became a naturalized citizen. Not paid a dime, and often fronting her own costs, she estimates she's been out on 800 to 1,000 border missions, sometimes two a day, when she's not running the OK Café. "You can imagine how much time is left for sleep," she says.

As we duck under barbed-wire fences and plod through the prickly pear, greasewood, and mesquite brush, the desert sky opens up like a black picnic blanket punched through with electric pinholes. Simcox works the land like an expert tracker, able to tell how long it's been since illegal traffic has moved through. He says a strong Minuteman presence in the region has mostly shut it down, even though as we speak, Border Patrol hops on a fresh batch just one culvert down from us.

It's a bit of a nostalgia tour, as Simcox relates one grisly tale after another about the people they find abandoned by heartless coyotes, the mostly Mexican smugglers who charge about $1,500 a head to move migrants through the daunting mountain passes, but who often split at the first sign of trouble. He tells me about the raped women and dehydrated babies and dead bodies that are constantly getting pulled out of the desert. Nearly 200 dead illegals have been found this year in Arizona alone. Simcox's strict

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Standard Operations Procedure manual bans Rambos and "Ninja Turtles," and his outfit enforces a "no-contact policy," meaning that to avoid any trouble or violence, which would surely undo the Minutemen with their legions of critics, volunteers are only to report the whereabouts of illegals to Border Patrol, and let them do the rest.

But the Minutemen are often forced to violate this policy to save migrants from death. Sometimes the illegals are so near expiration, after getting lost on a two or three-day walk through the desert, that they ask to be turned in. Ten aliens died on this stretch of border the weekend before my arrival. Out over the Fourth of July, Simcox's group saved one illegal by giving him water before turning him in, and found an unlucky comrade several yards away.

In the *Tumbleweed*'s next issue, on the page after the crossword puzzle, he ran a photo of the cadaver. Just days gone, the body was already a sack of bones held together by paper-thin, shriveled skin. The man was missing a foot, his skull picked clean by wild animals. And he was in good shape, comparatively speaking. Sometimes, when bodies are found in the near-120-degree heat, they're so decomposed that their sex isn't identifiable. In the caption, Simcox blamed Bush, John McCain, and others who refuse to support securing our borders with military troops, for the man's senseless death.

Simcox relates one grisly tale after another. Nearly 200 dead illegals have been found this year in Arizona alone.

Simcox points out various arroyos and washes where illegals who make it across lay up after being delivered by their coyote to wait for a ride to a town near you. Minutemen often give such spots facetious rest-stop-style nicknames, like "The G.W. Bush OTM Memorial Pick-Up." The places where the migrants congregate look like the contents of a Wal-Mart superstore, emptied ankle-deep. We find everything from school supplies to medications to baby clothes to soiled boxer-briefs to Don Pedro brandy (with limes) to baggies of garlic, which illegals mistakenly think will ward off poisonous snakes.

I ask Simcox the obvious: If women carrying babies can make it in without much trouble, assuming they don't get lost or dehydrated, how difficult would it be for a well-funded, well-armed terrorist with GPS navigation to skirt over the border? He looks at me like I'm a dim child. "Are you kidding?" he says. "Piece of cake!" About the biggest danger they'd face, from the looks of the trails, is tripping over one of the Jansport backpacks ditched by the thousands of Mexicans who've gone before them.

The next morning, we set out from Tombstone for a Minutemen recruiting meeting in Las Cruces. We work our way through the boot heel of New Mexico and along the southern border, stopping at ranches along the way to secure private property owners' permission to let the Minutemen walk the line during their four-state extravaganza in October. Trailing behind my SUV, which Simcox is driving, is Carmen, in another car, sipping a large green health-drink, as well as other members of Simcox's inner circle. They occasionally buzz in over the walkie-talkies that "Carmen has to tinkle," or that they should stop and eat. The hard-driving Simcox winces when they do. One gets the feeling that for him, eating is a distraction.

The posse includes Richard Humphries, a 70-year-old former undercover narcotics agent who resembles Elmore Leonard. For 20 years, Humphries had been going to Chihuahua, Mexico, to import pottery. He even owned a place there, which he's been forced to sell now that his profile's been raised on shows like Bill O'Reilly's. He and several other Minutemen have been warned by friends in Mexico that the Mexican cartels have placed a bounty on their heads. With the going rate at about ten grand per, the dark-humored lot occasionally debate whose head is worth most.

Then there's Al Garza, husband of Simcox's assistant Lucy, who moved to Tombstone a few years ago after retiring as a private investigator in L.A. The former Marine and decorated Vietnam veteran jokes that his title with the Minutemen is "ass-kicker and head-knocker." Originally suspicious that Simcox was a white supremacist, Garza went to interview him, liked what he heard and saw, and now goes out on patrols almost every other night. He makes no apologies, even though Hispanic detractors and some of his own relatives call him "coconut" (brown on the outside, white on the inside).

During one meal at a truck-stop/Pizza Hut, I ask Garza, who used to teach hand-to-hand combat in the Marines, where the most lethal pressure-points are. Before he can show me the proper way to punch some-

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one in the neck, Humphries interjects, "I was gonna say a .45 slug in the forehead." Simcox nearly spits up his personal pan pizza. "Why are you doing this?" he says to his colleagues. "He's just going to use it against us!"

Ever image-conscious, Simcox knows that the first big Minuteman slip-up might be the last. When I show him the two hats I bought in advance of our meeting, he kind of digs the straw-grapepicker's lid. But the militiaman Confederate flag cap? "Great," he says. "That's just what we f—ing need."

As we cruise through New Mexico, Simcox explains how he became the nation's most politically correct "vigilante." Born in Moline, Illinois, the son of a small-arms machinist and a surgical nurse, he moved around most of his childhood after his parents divorced. He was living in Memphis when Martin Luther King was shot, and says he spent most of his life sticking up for black kids and battling racism, sometimes even among family members.

In college, he "majored in girls," which saw him married young and briefly. By his mid-20s, he was managing a Tower Records store and producing little independent rap albums on the side, constantly scouting unknowns in New York. "We'd go into the studio," says Simcox, whose whiteness cannot be overstated, "and I'd say, 'I've got some beats.' [The rappers] would go, 'You white, you got no beats, man.'" After listening to his stuff, they'd say, "'Damn, are you black?' I was down with the brothers," Simcox says, blowing cigar smoke out my window.

After his first divorce, he met his second wife, a black actress he married after six weeks, and with whom he had a son. Both dreamed of making it in the entertainment industry, so they moved to L.A. Unable to catch a break, Simcox instead became a teacher, first at a rough South Central school, where he said he more closely resembled a prison warden; later, at Santa Monica's trendy Wildwood school, chock-full of celebrity children, touchy-feely New Educationist theory, and a diversity committee, which Simcox headed.

He says they were the best years of his life, though as a middle-class father he tired of the runaway materialism, the parents' unwillingness to discipline their children, and their knee-jerk liberalism. After starting a lucrative tutoring business on the side, Simcox said he realized how poisonous the climate was when he walked into the house of a student and saw "Bush sucks—Hitler's second return" scrawled on his dry-erase board. "This is an eight-year-old kid!" Simcox exclaims, no fan of Bush's himself. "That's wrong to teach your kids hate in that way. It's just not right."

Simcox's second wife had divorced him years earlier, when their careers took divergent paths. They shared custody of their son. But then Simcox's life was transformed by a single event: September 11. "That was it," he says. "Just one of those seminal moments in your life that changes things. You know that your country's going to be different."

Fretting that L.A. was next on the terrorist hit list, he wanted to get his teenage son out of the city for a few weeks, and even enroll him in an NRA-gun-safety course for his own protection. His wife had a fit, claimed he was overreacting, and hauled him before a judge. "Like that," he says, snapping his fingers, he lost custody of his son, which he says was "a total mind-f—."

To clear his head after 9/11, Simcox went on a camping trip in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument on the Arizona-Mexico border. What he saw next gave him his life's mission. Sitting on some rocks drinking water in Land-of-the-Lost backcountry, he heard Spanish voices. He looked around and saw a procession of 60 illegals traipsing through the park. The next day, he looked across a valley with binoculars and saw another procession, guys carrying AK-47s escorting vehicles with camo netting. "I'm wondering, 'What the hell is this? Are these freakin' terrorists bringing nukes into the country?"

He ran to the Park Service. "Dudes," he said, "do you know what's going on here?" They waved him off, saying, "They're just drug dealers, no big deal." And of the illegals, he was told, "They're just coming here to work. Happens all the time. Don't bother them, they won't bother you." The park service, like Border Patrol, said they were outmanned and outgunned, they didn't have any support from Washington, and couldn't get the support they needed.

"That was it," says Simcox. "Bam. Right there, I said, 'Wait a minute. You and I can't get a pair of f—ing fingernail clippers through airport security. The Patriot Act is going to put us under the thumb of the government, and our borders are wide open, and our government says, 'Yeah, there is nothing we can do about it'?"

Simcox attempted to join Border Patrol, but was turned down as too old despite being athletically fit, even after he offered to take a desk job. "I was the only male in my family never to serve in the military," he says. "I wanted to give service to my country, I wanted to do something now." He did just that, in a way.

For the next several months, he camped all along the Mexican border, witnessing 3,000 illegals cross with his own eyes. Unable to interest news outlets in his findings, he blew into Tombstone, and ended up buying the paper for $50,000 after his brief stint as a Helldorado gunfighter. Now, he gets to tell as many stories as he wants,

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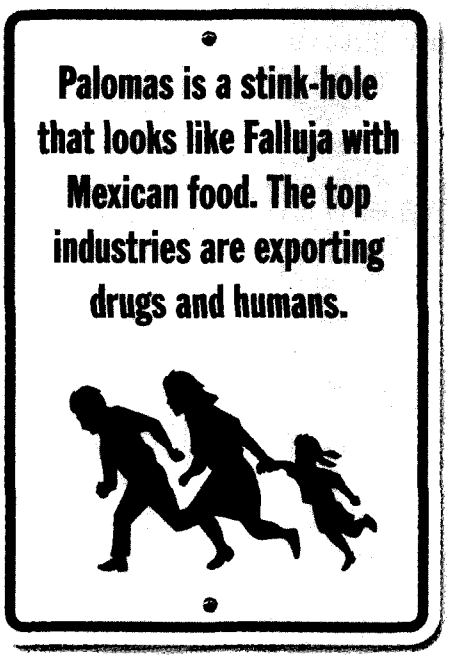
because after founding the Minutemen, he is the story.

He doesn't have much patience for detractors who've unfairly painted them as renegade Billy-Bobs. "We are the example of the most tough and tenacious, yet humane and compassionate, Americans you'll find in this country," he says. "We've faced hardcore gang members, we've been shot at, spit on, and never have we even unholstered a weapon. The innuendo that we're just a bunch of beer-drinking fools sitting around waiting to shoot somebody is an *affront* to great Americans," says the man who once campaigned for Ted Kennedy. "Especially many of them [who served] and who gave these damn, left-wing, commie journalists the right to say what they want so they can turn around and diss them. Jeez, what a bunch of punks, as my father would say. A bunch of college graduates that wouldn't lift a finger to defend the rights that they're given by people who fought for those rights."

Pre-9/11, says Simcox, "we were a soft target waiting to get kicked in the balls." He doesn't want it to happen again. "Political correctness?" asks the man who eagerly headed his school's diversity committee. "You can go smoke your political correctness. If enforcing the rule of law and getting tough on crime and telling the rest of the world you better not tread on me, if that offends you, go see a f—ing therapist. A bunch of namby-pamby little wimps we've got leading this country. Let's have some balls again! If our officials cower and risk American lives and sovereignty by not securing our borders, then they'd better get out of the way, because Americans are going to do it for themselves."



In Columbus, New Mexico, a one-horse town famous for getting pillaged and torched by Pancho Villa, I temporarily peel off from the Minutemen to shoot across the border to Palomas, a mere three miles away. My Spanish-speaking guide, who I'll call Paco, used to be the police chief of Palomas. It was a pretty thankless job. He was shot four times while doing it. Even last year, when the Mexican police tried to bust a local drug baron, the crime boss's henchmen riddled the station with bullets and set its cars aflame.

Since the Mexican border guards know Paco, they let us cross without showing ID. (More troubling is that on the way back into New Mexico, American officials who don't know Paco fail to make either of us produce identification.) Palomas is a stink-hole of a smuggler's town that looks like Falluja with Mexican food. The top two industries are exporting drugs and exporting humans. Ramshackle flophouses for aspiring illegals are everywhere, since Palomas is used as a staging area for crashing the border. Aliens take yellow buses to nearby Las Chepas, from which they set out on foot for the United States.

Paco, who knows everyone on both sides of the law, takes me around to see the sights. We drop by the old police station, where we're permitted to pose for photos with the one prisoner in the holding pen. He's so face-planted drunk on the floor that they don't bother shutting his cell. We knock back some Carta Blanca cervezas at one of the local watering holes, which doubles as a cathouse. "Like most things in Mexico, it's forbidden but tolerated," says Paco. As a tight Tejano band pumps accordion notes into the air, varicose-veined prostitutes slop enchiladas at the bar in full view of prospective customers. The hookers outnumber the johns by about two to one, and outweigh them by considerably more.

Paco has brought me to Palomas to introduce me to some aspiring border-jumpers, but he does me one better when we go to the town's central park. Under a creaky gazebo, amidst signs giving phone numbers to report suspicious activity, a half dozen coyotes hold court. Paco knows them because he once impounded one of their cars. They are all youngish, and despite Paco's vouching for me, they refuse to part with their names to the gringo who's writing everything down.

Through my translator, I conduct a round-robin symposium, as the coyotes recline on the steps in this dirt-poor town, their pockets bulging with so many greenbacks that they serve as a currency exchange for locals wishing to change pesos. One, decked in a Fila sweatsuit, anticipates a "little war" with the Minutemen, saying accidents will likely happen on their border runs, since the coyotes frequently holster cell phones, which can be mistaken for guns. They might have to use

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the services of Osama bin Laden, jokes one, since "he's a pretty savvy guy in the desert." The Minutemen shouldn't be out there, says another, sounding like an ACLU lawyer. "They are not law enforcement."

One can't blame the coyotes for wishing to stick with the law enforcement they know. Most of them have been apprehended and thrown out of our country anywhere from a dozen times to "too many to count." They take it about as seriously as an overdue library-book notice. None of them is disillusioned enough to find employment at the local furniture factory. Though if we ever put up a wall, one says he'll just stay on the other side and get a job as a snowplow driver in Denver.

They don't admit to leaving people behind in the desert—these are civic-minded coyotes. But when asked why their customers would risk death, they pull over a smiling Indian from Chiapas who's been quietly hovering on the edge of our circle. His hair is slicked back, and he wears baggy pants that were quite stylish back in 1991. They tell me and Paco he's trying to find enough scratch to make it over, but likely won't come up with it. He hasn't even eaten in two days, so they've taken up a collection to buy him lunch. Where he's from, he makes about 4 pesos a day doing fieldwork. In America, even 10 bucks a day would be a tremendous step up. The young man says he might try to make it over without a coyote, though he has no idea where he's going. I ask him if he's afraid. A coyote interjects, "He's more afraid of being hungry."

After share-time breaks up, I'm approached by a semi-retired coyote who speaks broken English. I ask him for his name, and he says, "Call me Ghost." He makes his living from plumbing and construction now, but still boasts, "I'm one of the best. I know the f—ing job." Oddly, he claims that these days, he is a pro-bono coyote, so that the people who most need to make it, do. "Man, everybody wanna go," he says. "They're gonna make it even if they die."

When I ask him why he no longer plays guide for pay, like his colleagues, he intimates that he's had a little trouble with our law, for moving things other than illegals. "I've done some bad things, but that doesn't make me a criminal, know what I mean?" He says he's facing 25-years-to-life if he's caught in America again. But Ghost doesn't care. Because the people that he helps "are good people who just want to live better." Plus, "Somebody helped my life once. I was in the desert dying, bleeding. Now it's my turn to return back the favor to another people."

Like Simcox, Ghost sees himself as a public servant. Since he was warned last year by American officials never to return, he's been back around 20 times. I bid Ghost adios, and tell him to stay safe. "Hey," he says cavalierly, pointing north, "see you over there."

The next day in Las Cruces, the Minutemen stage their recruiting meeting in a barn on the edge of town, and everyone plays a part. Simcox and Co. present a squeaky clean image. He is so condescendingly earnest about orderliness and rule of law, the need to stick to protocol, clean up one's trash in the desert, and have absolutely no contact with aliens unless it's to help them survive that the former schoolteacher's instructions should come printed on a freshly warm purple-and-white ditto.

Protesters from places like the League of United Latin American Citizens pack the back. One of the women frets beforehand that the vigilantes "might kill us." But it's pretty obvious their paranoia is for show, since many bring their children, who freely skitter across the speaking area while several Minutemen make grandfatherly funny-faces at the kids. When one protester accosts Simcox in mid-Q&A, accusing him of being a racist, Simcox calmly retorts, "My biracial African-American son would take great exception" to that.

After the meeting, it occurs to me that I've spent many hours talking to completely level-headed Minutemen. So for balance, I head for the most eccentric looking freak I can find, who turns out to be Freddy Puckett. He wears two hearing-aids, an "Undocumented Border Patrol" T-shirt, and a camo boonie-hat with a "Kiss me I'm ugly" badge stuck to it. He's a walking Radio-Shack rack, with all his blipping phones and walkie-talkies and other electronic contraptions strapped to his torso.

But it seems I've misjudged Freddy. A disabled Vietnam vet who carries landmine shrapnel in his chest, Freddy's the one who saved the illegal in the desert over the Fourth of July weekend when he cried out for "*agua, agua*." Perhaps unaware that *agua* is "Sesame Street"-level Spanish, an ebullient Freddy says he understood because "my wife is Hispanic. I just love to save people's lives and protect America. That's what I do."

Freddy says during the Minutemen's April campaign, he spent over $2,000 to stay on the line, but it was worth it. "Put it this way," he says. "I'm 60 years old. Maybe I've got 10 left. I don't fear that border. I'd rather die there for a cause than in a hospital from some disease. . . . Believe me, I go to Mexico all the time. I love the Mexican people. I'm just afraid of the ones with the dirty bombs. I'm saying, 'Come across the border, just sign the guestbook like I do when I go over there.' . . . And I believe if we don't protect ourselves now, and make the government do their part, we're going down the tubes. I believe in what I'm doing. I figure this is my last stand to help save America." ♦

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Speak of the Dead

The exploitation of Cindy Sheehan is only the latest instance of the left's grief-based politics.

By Noemie Emery

In the four years or so since September 11, liberals have found a new weapon of preference, and that weapon is martyrdom. They have discovered grief as a tactical weapon. They tend to like grief they can use. They use it to arouse guilt and sympathy to cover a highly partisan message, in the hope that while the message may be controversial, the messenger will be sacrosanct and above reproach. Since 9/11, they have embraced this tactic repeatedly, and each time with a common objective: to cripple the war, to denounce the country, to swing an election, but mainly to embarrass and undermine the president.

The first time was in May 2002, when Democrats accused Republicans of insulting the dead of September 11 by selling a photo of George W. Bush on Air Force One on that day. The second was in October 2002, when Democrats tried to capitalize politically on the shock and sorrow from the deaths of Paul Wellstone, his wife, and his daughter. The third go was with the "Jersey Girls," four young widows whose husbands died in the Towers, whom Gail Sheehy formed into a Bush-bashing regiment, and who ended up campaigning for John Kerry and cutting commercials for him. And the fourth, of course, is poor Cindy Sheehan, the bereaved mother of Army Specialist Casey Sheehan, who was killed in action in Baghdad in April 2004. Sheehan is now surrounded by the usual clique of far-out cause-mongers, who orchestrate her every move for maximum drama. All of these episodes involve attempts to attack without fear of reprisal, by exploiting the sympathy people feel for those who have suffered as well as the natural reluctance to hurt those in pain.

Let us meander down memory lane, way back to May 2002, when the Republican National Committee offered for sale to some of its donors a set of three pictures from the first year of the Bush presidency, including one from September 11 that showed him talking on the phone from Air Force One as he looked out the plane's window. Immediately, a cry went up from prominent Democrats that he had insulted the dead. "Disgraceful," said Al Gore. "Incredibly disrespectful to the families of the thousands of Americans who lost their lives just hours before this photo was taken," said Terry McAuliffe, then chairman of the Democratic National Committee, without telling us why.

This was the start of an ongoing campaign on the part of the Democrats to rule the attacks and Bush's response to them out of bounds, down to attacking as crude and exploitative his decision to hold his 2004 convention in New York. This was a predictable partisan ploy, but by March 2004, the party had found some new allies. When the Bush campaign unveiled its campaign ads, including some shots of the smoldering wreck at Ground Zero, with rescue workers bearing a flag-covered stretcher, the attack was already prepared. The newspaper headlines said everything: "Sept. 11 Victims' Kin Urge Bush to Pull Ads," read one *Boston Globe* story. "Bush Ads Using 9/11 Images Stir Anger," ran one in the *Washington Post*. "It upsets me tremendously that . . . my son could be used as a political pawn," said one victim's father. "To say that we're outraged is the truth, but it's more than outrage," said a woman whose brother had died in the North Tower. "It's a deep hurt and sorrow that any politician . . . would seek to gain advantage by using that site." "Our message to all politicians is, 'Keep your hands off Ground Zero,'" the brother of another victim said.

Into the breach charged a vast herd of Democrats, all lashing Bush for his lack of fine feelings: "Speaking to a crowd of 2,000 at a campaign rally in New Orleans," the *Boston Globe* reported, "Senator John F. Kerry whipped the audience into a frenzy of booing as the presumptive Democratic nominee denounced Bush for using images of the September 11 attacks." It was not until weeks later that it was fully revealed that all of those quoted were not a cross-section of victims' relatives repelled by the president's crassness, but members of a minuscule subset who belonged to a pacifist group called September 11

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Families for Peaceful Tomorrows, whose press conference was orchestrated by MoveOn.org. In the end, it turned out that they not only did not represent all or most of the families, they didn't even represent their own families, as some of their parents and siblings were opposed to their acts. Indeed, their impact was neutralized, as they succeeded in rousing a counterreaction among survivors who were hoping to stay out of politics, but were galvanized by them to stand up for the president. By enlisting the dead, they gave Bush's campaign a very rough send-off, which of course had always been the idea.

An even less good idea was that embraced by some Democrats in Minnesota when Paul Wellstone was killed in a plane crash at the very end of a close 2002 Senate race against Republican Norm Coleman. Wellstone had died with his wife, his daughter, and five others, and the shock of the loss stunned the state and the nation. Two years before, when Missouri governor Mel Carnahan had similarly been killed in a plane crash in the closing days of his Senate race, party leaders had drafted his widow and successfully framed the race as a memorial to the dead man. Wellstone left no natural successor, but there was a proxy of sorts in former vice president Walter F. Mondale, who had been around so long he seemed he could be Wellstone's father, and who agreed to run in his stead.

The race, Mondale's drafters hoped, could be run as a memorial to Wellstone, in an aura of reverence. Harry Reid and other Senate factotums warned Coleman's campaign that it would be improper to criticize Mondale, or to campaign at all until after Wellstone's memorial service, which would be several days later (and a week before the election). Meanwhile, Democrats felt free to frame Senate races all over the country as tributes to Wellstone, that they wanted to win in his memory. Caught in this box, Coleman slipped to eight points behind Mondale, and was thought to be finished by the day planned for Wellstone's public memorial. Then everything changed.

"Most of the event feels like a rally," thought *Slate*'s Will Saletan as he entered the University of Minnesota arena. "The touching recollections are followed by sharply political speeches urging Wellstone's supporters to channel their grief into electoral victory. The crowd repeatedly stands, stomps, and whoops." Republican senators were booed, while Democrats were cheered, none more so than Mondale. "As the evening's speakers proceed," reported Saletan, "it becomes clear that to them, honoring Wellstone's legacy is all about winning the election. Repeating the words of Wellstone's son, the assembly shouts, 'We will win! We will win!'" Then Wellstone's friend and campaign treasurer took the stage to address by name Wellstone's Republican friends in the House and the Senate and beg them to "honor" the fallen man by helping Mondale win the race: "We can redeem the sacrifice of his life, if you help us win this election," he said.

In translation, this is the unspoken theme of grief-centered politics: *We are suffering, so you owe it to us to give us what we ask for*. This is the claim of Cindy Sheehan and the Jersey Girls, and it carries with it an implied accusation: *If you don't do what we ask you, you don't care that our loved one is dead*. But no one had ever heard it stated so baldly or bluntly as at the Wellstone service, and the bluntness repelled. "The late senator was treated as little more than one broken egg in a great get-out-the-vote omelet," wrote Christopher Caldwell in these pages. "The pilots and aides who died with him were barely treated at all." People stalked out. People complained. Floods of cash poured into Norm Coleman's campaign, which found itself suddenly energized. The scandal had not only dissipated the aura of reverence, it gave Coleman permission to run hard against Mondale. He did. Not only did he win, but the riptide seemed to extend to neighboring states, helping pull in Jim Talent, who edged past Jean Carnahan, who had been comparing the Wellstone disaster to her own husband's death. Lesson to liberals: Grief-centered politics has to be subtle. It's a lesson they haven't quite learned.

It was not learned by the Jersey Girls, the four widows from the Middletown area, who, like Cindy Sheehan, had lost kin in the war, but in lower Manhattan, not Iraq, and husbands, not sons. They were discovered by Gail Sheehy, a writer and liberal Democrat, who had come to their town to write about healing, and stayed to dabble in activist politics, forming the Moms into a corps of crusaders, bent on finding the flaws in the system, and then on blaming them all upon Bush. The Moms seemed at first to have been apolitical (two of them claimed to have voted Republican), but they soon began sounding exactly like Sheehy, who became their coach, their den mother, sponsor, and publicist, detailing their struggles in the *New York Observer* under a series of headlines such as "Four 9/11 Moms Battle Bush," "Vigilant Widows Wait for Condi With Suspicion," and "Moms Battle Bush." Wrote Sheehy: "So afraid is the Bush administration of what could be revealed by inquiries into its failures . . . it is unabashedly using Kremlin tactics to muzzle members

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Cindy Sheehan, Crawford, Texas

of Congress . . . but there is at least one force that the administration cannot scare off or shut up."

Trading on the reluctance of people and of politicians to seem to be rude to pretty young widows, she used their status as the bereaved to push the government into staging an investigation of the events leading up to 9/11. Sheehy tossed off stories of the four in their kitchens, coloring Easter eggs and planning their Passover seders, as they discussed their ambitions to nail Condi Rice. "It's *The Mmes. Smith go to Washington*," she trilled happily. "Instead of Jimmy Stewart shouting himself hoarse in the well of the Senate, these young suburban widows have banded together to coax and cajole, outwit and outlast their national leaders until officials face up to their mistakes." For "face up to mistakes" read "embarrass the president," a goal they did not try to hide.

Sheehy, the Moms, and their legions of fans saw them as heartbroken souls facing a sinister government, but to a growing number of people they came to appear as both sad and obsessive, demanding in retrospect a form of clairvoyance from government, and over their heads in discussing such matters as counterintelligence. "In the public pronouncements of the Jersey Girls we find . . . hardly a jot of accusatory rage at the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks," the *Wall Street Journal*'s Dorothy Rabinowitz noted. "Who . . . would not be struck by the fact that all their fury and accusation is aimed not at the killers . . . but at the American president, his administration, and an ever wider assortment of targets, including the Air Force, the Port Authority, the City of New York?" (One who was struck was Debra Burlingame, sister of a pilot who died at the Pentagon, who emerged as the head of a backlash against them. By the time Condi Rice did testify, the family members had split into two different factions: the Moms, who staged a conspicuous walkout, and the Burlingame forces, who applauded her lustily.) In the end, the Moms and the commission went out with a whimper, the Moms enraged when it failed to damn Bush. By now, they were linked to the website of Peaceful Tomorrows, but it no longer mattered, nor did their endorsement of Kerry,

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who lost. This was the end of their spell in the limelight. When they failed to deliver what Sheehy expected—the ouster of Bush, or at least his embarrassment—she quickly lost interest, and the four moms are now back in New Jersey, bereft not only of their husbands, but also of the publicity, adulation, and public attention on which they seemed to have come to depend.

After the Jersey Girls, there was nowhere to go but to "Mother Sheehan,"* who, like the Wellstone Memorial, may be about to implode. In her case, her cover as Everymom is more easily broken, as her connection to the Loony Left is far more explicit, and her tongue is a lot less controlled. You might not know it from her televised interviews (where she seems well coached by the expensive media mavens retained by *MoveOn.org*), but the Internet is alive with her unscripted sayings, and they make quite a collection. To anyone's knowledge, none of the Jersey Girls or members of Peaceful Tomorrows has appeared on a program with Lynne Stewart, the convicted lawyer and friend to Islamic terrorists, and proclaimed her a personal heroine. None has ever said anything like this to a public gathering: "We have no constitution. We're the only country with no checks and balances. We want our country back if we have to impeach George Bush down to the person who picks up the dog s— in Washington. Let George Bush send his two little party animals to die in Iraq."

Few Everymoms have ever told newsmen: "America has been killing people on this continent since it was started. This country is not worth dying for." Few Everymoms have been endorsed and commended by David Duke, the Hitler admirer, because he agrees with their statements that their sons were killed to help the Jews. The Crawford Peace House—the Crawford, Texas, group that sustained her protests against the vacationing president through the first half of August—is dedicated less to opposition to the war in Iraq than to the belief that Israel is the source of all evil, so she has now added that to her list.

*The name comes from a poster at the left-wing website, *Daily Kos*, who asked, "What are we trying to accomplish with promoting her?" Among his suggestions for "framing Cindy Sheehan": "We should call her 'Mother Sheehan'. We should never call her Cindy. . . . She is not a person now, she is a mother, which is not an expression of her individuality, but rather the expression of her eternal character: the mother, the bringer of life who has been wronged by state power."

It took a few weeks for Peaceful Tomorrows to reveal itself as a partisan outfit, and months for the same thing to occur with the Jersey Girls, but with the Sheehan phenomenon, it has only been a matter of days. And the reaction has set in already: Other family members, also bereaved, have denounced her performance, and other military families have come forward to declare she does not speak for them. Among them has been Linda Ryan, whose son, Marine Corporal Marc T. Ryan, was killed in Iraq in November. "George Bush didn't kill [Cindy Sheehan's] son," she told her local New Jersey newspaper, the *Gloucester County Times*. "George Bush was my son's commander in chief. My son, Marc, totally believed in what he was doing." "She's going about this not realizing how many people she's hurting. When she refers to anyone killed in Iraq, she's referring to my son. She doesn't have anything to say about what happened to my son."

Since the Florida recount, the left has been driven mad by their loathing for George W. Bush, which subsequent elections in 2002 and 2004 only intensified. And since 9/11, they have also been turned into grief-seeking missiles, and slipped into a confusion and squalor that boggle the mind.

"The moral authority of parents who bury children killed in Iraq is absolute," declares the *New York Times*'s Maureen Dowd. What she means is the moral authority of those she finds useful. Does she accept the moral authority of Linda Ryan, who finds Sheehan disgraceful? Does she bow to the moral authority of the thousands of parents of the dead and the wounded who support the war and the president, and find her snideness disgusting? Can she begin to guess at what the phrase even means?

There are so many people who have buried children, and so many more who have had children wounded, and so many more who have children in danger, that their political views cannot be uniform. What happens when the opinions behind which they put all of their moral authority collide? When parents and other family members of the dead and wounded disagree about politics, who gets custody of the moral authority? Is the moral authority of Cindy Sheehan compromised by the dissent of her husband, who is also a parent in agony?

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that for Dowd and her ilk, moral authority stems less from service or suffering than from the potential to cause serious trouble for Bush. Thus combat service gave great moral authority to John Kerry, running against Bush for president, but did nothing at all for the 100-plus Swift Boat

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Veterans who opposed Kerry, most of whom had more medals than Kerry, had more wounds than Kerry, and also served much longer terms. (Dowd and other liberals denounced these combat veterans as assassins and liars, denying the curative powers of service and sacrifice. But then, *c'est la guerre*.) To them, the grief of Cindy Sheehan is more valid than the grief of her husband and other numerous relatives, and much more valid than the grief of Linda Ryan, which they fail to acknowledge as meaningful. The grief of a Kristen Breitweiser is more meaningful than that of a Debra Burlingame, and much more meaningful than that of Ted Olson, whose wife died on the plane that went into the Pentagon, but who is also a conservative stalwart, whose wife was also a conservative stalwart, and who argued and won the case of *Bush* v. *Gore*. What's *his* moral authority? Do we need to ask?

Do we need to ask also what they have been doing to politics, with these poisoned injections of grief? The health of the political process rests upon vigorous argument, in which the back and forth is intense and protracted, so that the holes in all arguments—and there are holes in all arguments—are thoroughly aired and exposed. But no one wants a vigorous argument with a 30-year-old widow who has seen her husband burned to death in the wreckage of the World Trade Center towers, or with a parent who has just lost a son. No one wants to have an argument, period, or even be heard to be raising one's voice.

Political cut and thrust does not go well with the etiquette of bereavement, which tends to short-circuit all argument, which of course is the point. It inhibits argument, makes response awkward, and sometimes can stop it completely, putting an opponent in the position of Norm Coleman before the Wellstone Memorial fracas, in which Democrats were free to seek votes based on sentiment, while anything Coleman tried to say about Wellstone's replacement was called an insult to the dead. People who put mourners up front on policy issues are like robbers leaving a bank with a hostage between themselves and police fire. To do this on purpose, to drive an agenda, is beneath all contempt.

Here is a message for our friends in the grief-based community: Really, you must cut this out. We are tired of having our emotions worked on and worked over; tired of the matched sets of dueling relatives, tired of all of these claims on our sympathy, that at the same time defy common sense. The heart breaks for everyone who lost relatives and friends on September 11, as it does for the relatives of the war dead and wounded, as it does for the sons of Paul Wellstone. It does not break for MoveOn.org, Maureen Dowd, and Gail Sheehy, who have not been heartbroken, except by a string of election reverses, and are using the anguish of other people in an effort to turn them around. Especially, it does not break for George Soros, who, after squandering millions on the Kerry campaign, is now using poor Cindy Sheehan to get back in the action, and it does not break for political operative Joe Trippi, late of the Howard Dean meltdown, who is trying to do the same thing. She is now the vehicle for a collection of losers, who will use her, and then toss her over and out once she has served their purposes, or more likely failed to do so. Her family has broken up under the effects of this circus; she has now lost her husband, as well as her son. Please, send her back to her therapist, and what is now left of her broken-up family. And please—do not try this again. ♦

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Let's Not Talk Turkey

Guess who won't be joining the European Union anytime soon.

By Gerard Baker

Even by the European Union's own standards of vaulting futility, the charade it will inaugurate on October 3 will be especially pointless. On that date, to great fanfare, the European Union will formally launch accession negotiations for Turkey. Heads of government will speak solemnly about this historic opportunity. Officials will lovingly pore over sheaves of paper that map out Turkey's route to membership inthe European club at some unspecified moment in the future. Scribes of a romantic disposition will celebrate the great merger of East and West represented by the bridging of the Bosphorus.

This being Brussels, seat of the fantasy empire of geostrategic make-believe, no one will be so impolite as to point out the absurdity of the occasion. But the truth is Turkey has as much chance of joining the European Union as John Kerry has of winning a recount in Ohio. It isn't going to happen.

Only eight months after European leaders decided to begin negotiations on membership with Ankara, events have conspired to ensure that what was already a long shot has become a no-hoper. The rejection of the E.U. constitutional treaty by France and the Netherlands spoke to a deepening European hostility to the very idea of enlargement. A Eurobarometer poll by the European Commission in July found that among the 15 countries that have been members the longest, support for Turkish accession was at 32 percent.

Fear of the economic consequences of admitting millions of relatively low-paid workers into the European labor market, together with rising concern over the dilution of European identity by an alien Middle Eastern culture makes the idea of Turkish membership highly unpopular. If the French didn't like the idea of the (Catholic) Polish plumber putting good Frenchmen out of work, they are not going to warm to the (Muslim) Turkish bricklayer.

Even in Britain, a country historically disposed to admitting Turkey, the events of the summer are likely to play out to Ankara's disadvantage. The terrorist attacks in London led to a fundamental reappraisal of Britain's embrace of multiculturalism. The prospect of 70 million Turks having the right of free movement to Britain's shores is not likely to go well with British voters.

Next month these sizable popular obstacles to Turkish membership will be buttressed by a very large political one. If, as still seems probable, the Christian Democratic-Christian Social coalition wins the German elections on September 18, on their own or in coalition with the Free Democratic party, Turkey's dimming hopes will recede further. Under the leadership of Angela Merkel, the largest country in Europe will be headed by a government that is resolutely opposed to an enlargement to Turkey. Within eighteen months France too could have a new government likely to be more reflective of the popular will against Turkish membership than the current one. Adding sacred insult to all this secular injury, even the Holy Spirit seems to be against the Turks. The new pope, Benedict XVI, elected in April to succeed John Paul II, has been one of the most outspoken opponents of Turkey joining the European Union.

The European Union won't formally say No to Turkey, of course. The negotiations will begin in October as planned. But like Ulysses' journey round the Aegean, Turkey's voyage into the European Union is likely to be long, arduous, and ultimately tragic.

Britain and the new E.U. members will still press for Turkey's accession, but other governments will stall, finding thousands of reasons why Turkey is not doing

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enough to warrant a firm date for entry. In the end some kind of relationship along the lines of Merkel's idea of a "privileged partnership" is likely; something that stops well short of Turkish aspirations and well short of genuine inclusion in the European economic and political space.

This now inevitable rebuff to Ankara's ambition will be an event of enormous global political significance. Realization by Turkey that its European vocation—the defining point of its foreign policy and national orientation for the last 20 years—is over will lead to a radical reappraisal of the country's external direction and, quite possibly, its internal politics. Rejection will also have large implications for the United States, for its aims in Europe, its relations with Russia and the former Soviet bloc and with the broader Middle East.

Turkey is likely to respond angrily to the growing inevitability that the European Union will never get to Yes. This will fit with a Turkish-told narrative that is potent for radical shifts in domestic politics and foreign policy. According to this narrative, Turkey has been patronized and insulted by Europe despite strenuous efforts by Ankara to please the Europeans.

Associated Press

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, right, embraces German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder

On a recent trip to Turkey, a senior government official pointed out to me that the country originally applied for E.U. membership in 1987; all the other countries that have applied subsequently—from the Baltics to Malta—have either been admitted or been given firm dates for admittance. Yet Turkey, this official noted, was a reliable ally in the Cold War, a vital bulwark against the Communist threat. When countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia were members of the Warsaw Pact, Turkey was a frontline NATO state, an inviting target for Soviet missiles. The former Communists now enjoy the full fruits of E.U. membership: The reliable ally Turkey suffers outside.

Recently, as it has geared up for membership, Turkey has made significant changes to its domestic politics and culture to align itself with European norms—reducing the role of the military and introducing human rights reforms. Over Cyprus, the government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan went further than any of its predecessors to persuade—successfully—the Turkish population to accept a United Nations peace settlement. (Turkey, of course, refuses to recognize Cyprus, a current E.U. member, while occupying about one-third of its land.) The Greeks rejected it.

From the Turkish viewpoint, if all these efforts achieve nothing from the Europeans, perhaps the country should look elsewhere for its strategic ambitions. Though the United States officially sympathizes with Turkey's frustration over the E.U.'s foot-dragging, the Turks resent Washington even more than Europe these days.

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America's bungled attempt to get the Ankara parliament's approval for Turkish support for the war in March 2003 left Americans irritated and even pro-Americans in Turkey frustrated. And that was the high point of recent relations. Since the war began, Turkish sentiment has turned steadily more negative.

Many Turks, including some at the highest levels of government, are convinced that the United States is at best conniving, at worst actively plotting, the creation of a Kurdish state, with claims on the Kurdish parts of Turkey's soil. They watch with alarm at the political situation in Kirkuk, a city Kurds would like to see become the de facto capital of Kurdistan, where the Turkmen population is being steadily marginalized and isolated.

From Kurdish Iraq, the PKK, the terrorist group, operates with near impunity against Turkish targets. Even U.S. officials acknowledge that specific assurances given to Turkey in advance of the war about clamping down on the PKK have not been kept. Inside Turkey, media coverage of Iraq dwells heavily on allegations of U.S. "atrocities." The news is full of reports of fellow Muslims murdered by American troops; the terrorists who are killing many more innocent Iraqis are treated as the "resistance."

With Iraq a long way from political stability, Ankara blames the United States for unleashing turmoil on its own borders. As Turkey sees it, the country has been shut out of the European Union and abused by the United States. Why shouldn't it look elsewhere in the world for friends and allies?

But while Turkish resentment at some of the events of the last few years is understandable, American and European neglect are not entirely to blame for the changes underway. International events have played into the hands of those in Turkish domestic politics who have long favored a reorientation of the country's global approach—away from its traditional alliances with Europe and the United States and towards closer relationships with our current and former enemies. Such a shift would significantly change the strategic balance in the region.

But the claim that Turkey has been unloved and unrewarded by the West is not valid. Though E.U. membership has now receded again, Turkey has been on the receiving end of substantial assistance from the West. In 2003, even after the country failed to support the U.S. invasion of Iraq, it still got $1 billion in American aid to help with costs associated with the war.

More important, in 2001, despite deep skepticism among the Bush administration's economic advisers, Turkey got approval for one of the largest packages of assistance ever from the International Monetary Fund. It was clear that the support owed more to U.S. eagerness to prop up a weak ally than to dispassionate economic assessment.

And for all of Turkey's claims that it has made leaps forward at the insistence of the European Union and the United States to become a dynamic and open economic system, the country's record leaves much to be desired. Turkey remains, in effect, closed to investors. Direct foreign investment stands at around 1 percent of the nation's gross domestic product, pitifully low by Western standards.

Large, inefficient, government-run businesses have not been privatized, and where there has been international involvement, it has not been on the basis of open, free, competition. These are not the actions of a government intent on aligning itself with the world's major free capitalist economies. And if economic policy has served to keep Turkey on a separate path, domestic policies have too.

The AKP (Justice and Development party) of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is an avowedly Islamic party that challenges the constraints of Turkey's rigid 80-year-old Ataturk-founded secularism. At home this has meant steady pressure on the borders that keep separate the distinct worlds of faith and state. The AKP's supporters chafe at strict rules that forbid public displays of religion or the teaching of religion in pre-high school education.

There has also been a troubling rise in anti-Semitic sentiment and propaganda in the country in the last few years. At any bookstore in Istanbul or Ankara you will find prominently displayed Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, a popular seller these days. The government's Religious Affairs Directorate has spoken out against the activities of Christian missionaries, claiming they represent a threat to the nation's religious identity and the freedom of Muslims.

The country is probably not on a slippery slope towards becoming an Islamist state, as some critics contend. The AKP, thanks to a bizarre electoral system, managed to win a majority of seats in parliament with only a little over 30 percent of the vote. Support for Ataturk's constitutional legacy does not appear to be atrophying. The military, always looming ominously in Turkish politics, remains unlikely to tolerate a further slide towards Islamism.

But the intentions of the AKP's leaders seem clear—to move the country in a more Islamic direction and in a way that further complicates Turkey's relations with Europe and the United States. Turkish foreign policy seems to be moving in the same direction. Erdogan's chief adviser is Ahmet Davutoglu, a shrewd and articu-

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late academic who is the driving force behind the country's foreign policy changes.

Davutoglu has urged Erdogan to take a more balanced approach to Turkish global strategy. In his book *Strategic Depth*, Davutoglu talks about the need for Turkey to pursue alliances beyond its traditional ties to the West. He insists that he continues to favor strong relations through NATO and E.U. membership with the United States and Europe, but he also argues that Turkey has a historic opportunity to be a leader in the Muslim world, and its geographic position means it should improve historically poor relations with Russia and China.

But Davutoglu has spent time in Malaysia and speaks highly of that country's supposedly dynamic and rather unique combination of Islam, capitalism, and democracy. It is no surprise, then, that in recent months Erdogan has reached out to some unsavory characters in Turkey's neighborhood, visiting President Bashar Assad in Syria earlier this year and traveling to Tehran to meet the Iranian mullahs.

Officials insist these trips were part of the necessary diplomacy for a country facing instability on its borders, and Erdogan was careful to criticize both countries for their failure to promote democracy and for their role in destabilizing the Middle East. But Turkey also has a common interest with both Syria and Iran in blocking any movement towards the emergence of an independent Kurdistan—an issue that may be assuming a higher priority for Ankara than good relations with the United States and the European Union.

Davutoglu's influence is evident elsewhere. Earlier this year, Turkey overcame decades of enmity with Russia to sign a trade pact. Relations with China have been improving. Turkey's historically cordial relationship with Israel has chilled markedly in the last two years.

Events overseas and political currents at home, then, are combining to push Turkey away from the embrace of the West that has driven its foreign policy for 60 years. How concerned should the United States be and what might it do to counter these trends?

"Losing" Turkey would be a devastating setback for U.S. strategic interests. For all the changes underway there, Turkey remains a moderate Muslim country that serves as a beacon for the sort of democratic reform the United States is trying to promote in the Muslim world. Turkey's support will be necessary to achieve stability in Iraq and change in Syria and Iran; a hostile Turkey in any of these matters will complicate U.S. goals immeasurably.

Continuing to insist on Turkish membership in the European Union may look like a good rhetorical option for U.S. diplomacy—it is an easy way for Washington to look good in Turkish eyes—but as the unreality of that objective becomes clearer, this will be an empty policy. In the meantime the United States should look for alternatives.

It should pressure the Turks to open up their economic system to genuine reform. It should insist on greater transparency by the Turkish government and ease of access by foreign companies—not as some carrot for eventual E.U. membership, but because an open economy is in Turkey's best interest and likely to bring it into the family of free nations.

The United States should do more to ease Turkish concerns about the PKK in Iraq. A war on terrorism that does not extend to the aggressive pursuit of this especially nasty brand of thugs is less than worthy of the name. The Bush administration should seek to relieve Turkish fears about Kirkuk and Kurdistan, since there is little real strategic interest for the United States in seeing movement towards an independent Kurdistan outside Iraq.

The United States should work hard at its public diplomacy in Turkey. In a BBC poll earlier this year Turkey actually had the highest proportion, 82 percent, of respondents who believed Bush's reelection boded ill for world peace and security.

Much will depend on how successful the United States is in Iraq. Creating a stable, unified, democratic Iraq will go a long way towards changing political intentions and public perceptions in Turkey. In the end, though, it will be up to the Turks themselves to stop the deterioration in relations with the West. The signs there are not good.

Nothing captures the mounting mood of anti-American insecurity in Turkey better than the stunning success this year of a work of fiction. *Metal Storm*, cowritten by Burak Turna and Orkun Ucar, chronicles a future war with the United States, whose forces open fire on Turks who have been helping keep the peace in Iraq. Before long a full scale war is unleashed by American forces on Turkish cities. The United States' motives are, of course, strategic and pecuniary. Washington wants to subjugate Turkey and get its hands on the country's rich mineral resources.

The authors may have captured the nation's current hysteria about American intentions, but they haven't quite got current international politics right. In their version, the Turks turn desperately to outsiders for help and get it, from Russia and, more improbably, the European Union. The pattern of recent events in Europe suggests that last part, at least, is pure fantasy. ♦

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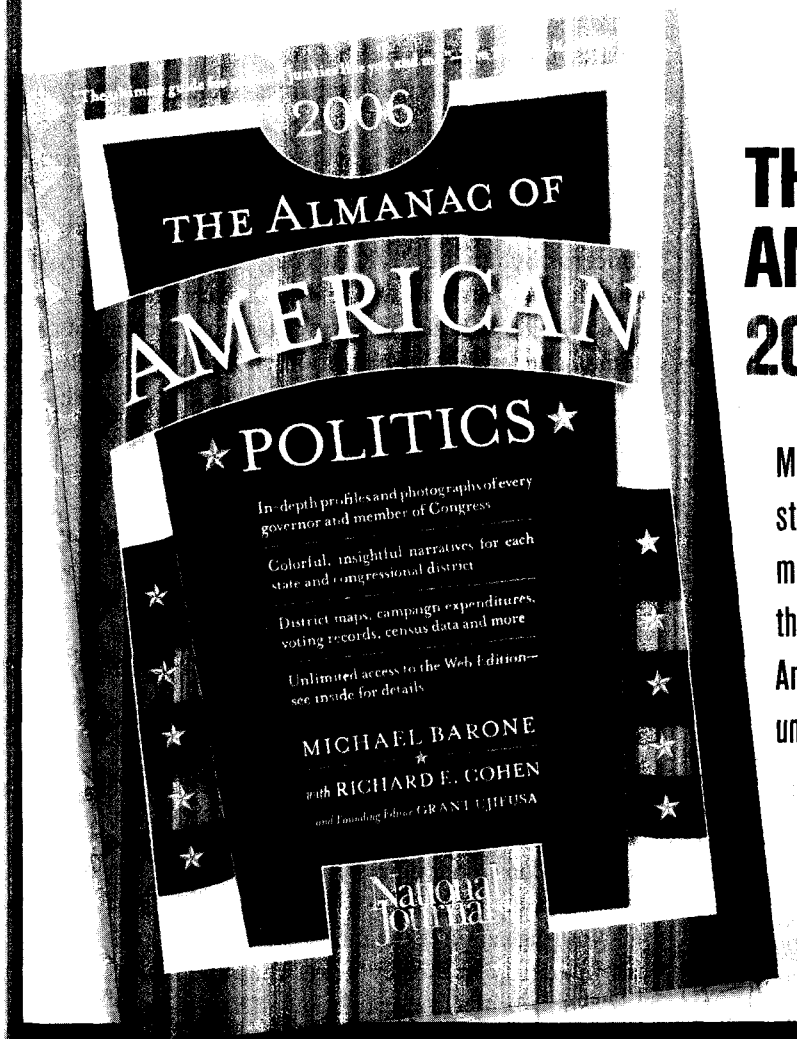

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Aneurin Bevan and his wife, Jenny Lee, 1956

CORBIS

The Other Welsh Wizard

Labour's left once had a Leader By Christopher Hitchens

The socialist movement, it was once said, was "the only movement in history that wants power only in order to give it away." You might wish to inquire: Once said by whom? The claim seems a preposterous one from several angles, including the perspective of the Stalin terror, the capitulation of social democracy in the war hysteria of 1914, the dreary rule of the Eastern European "People's Democracies," or the ossified, bureaucratic, union-dominated welfare statism that was given its quietus by Margaret Thatcher and her emulators in other countries about a quarter-century ago.

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair. *His most recent collection of essays is* Love, Poverty, and War.

Bevan
by Clare and Francis Becket
Haus, 167 pp., £9.99

But the speaker in this case was Aneurin Bevan, one of the moral and political giants of the European Left. The eclipse of socialism has partly occluded the memory of a number of great individuals—I would cite Willy Brandt in Germany, Bruno Kreisky in Austria, Claude Bourdet in France—who took part in the emancipation and education of the working class, spoke up for the colonial "subjects" of the European empires, and resisted both Nazism and communism. It doesn't do to forget examples like these.

One of the reasons that the word "communitarian" sounds so sickly and vapid—apart from the fact that it *is* sickly and vapid—is its inauthentic nostalgia. A sense of community and solidarity is either innate or it is nothing: If you have to call something a community these days ("the business community," "the Hispanic community," best and worst of all, "the intelli-

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gence community") then it almost certainly isn't one. Aneurin Bevan (the first name is pronounced A-nye-rin and was generally shortened to "Nye") came from the tightest-knit community of them all: the coal miners of the Welsh valleys. Disciplined by the hard, collective battle to chisel the anthracite from the rock, and further cemented together by their close-quarter living in often-isolated pit villages, the mineworkers and their union were once described, by a respectful Tory, as "The Brigade of Guards of the Labour Movement."

This was not just because of their celebrated militancy and *esprit de corps*. In miners' institutes and working men's clubs in the Welsh valleys, great libraries were painstakingly set up, concerts performed, and choirs and orchestras organized. Bertrand Russell's first book, about the German Social Democrats, showed how the party and its unions were capable of providing an alternative society, with everything from sports teams to vacations, and of educating their more talented members to a university standard. Welsh Labour could say the same. It was this cultural dimension—of the self-taught and self-confident working man—that produced a number of outstanding parliamentarians, among whom Bevan was preeminent.

The temptations of extremism were always very great: Mineworkers and their families lived in conditions which Bertolt Brecht might have found it simplistic to portray, with hereditary landowners laying claim not only to the coal underground, but to the ramshackle cabins in which the toilers were crammed. Sometimes the mines would blow up or cave in, often causing the cottages to subside as well. Lung disease of the cruelest kind was endemic, and killed Bevan's father. In spite of this, he took an early decision that the writings of Karl Marx, however inspiring, were not to be his guide. Rejecting the syndicalism of some other factions, he opted to take his rhetorical skills to Westminster and took his seat as a member of parliament in 1929, at the age of 31.

The authors give an excellent potted history of the calamities which overtook the Labour party in the years between the wars. Attempting to preserve or perhaps to revive its pre-Great War glory, the British establishment stuck as long as it could to the gold standard, the Empire, and the paternalistic workplace. When the slump came and economies had to be made, they were naturally made in the living standards of the unorganized. Bevan saw this as, among other things, a callous destruction of family life. "In the small rooms and around the meager tables of the poor," he told the House, "hells of personal acrimony and wounded vanities arise." To oppose this humiliation was Bevan's *raison d'être*. (He had another narrow escape from extremism when he withdrew at the last moment from a flirtation with Sir Oswald Mosley's New party, which was rapidly turning from radical Keynesianism to fascism.)

Labour's hatred for "the old gang" led it into fatal error when the true menace of fascism did disclose itself. Not unlike certain casuistic "peace" forces of our own day, it opposed the Nazis in theory and in principle but would not vote for the weapons or the policies that would enable armed resistance. While it may have been true that the Tories were not trustworthy opponents of the Axis in either theory or practice, the refusal of much of the left to support rearmament was a historic error, and it opened a lifelong split between Bevan and his near-namesake Ernest Bevin, the belligerent spokesman of Labour's realist wing. (After 1945, it was Bevin as foreign secretary who signed the founding document of NATO, employing as his signet a ring given him by Samuel Gompers, the founder of the American Federation of Labor. One forgets how much Atlanticism owes to the workers' movement.)

The great general in the class wars of the 1920s and 1930s had been Winston Churchill, who took personal responsibility for the crushing of the General Strike in 1926, had demonstrated some early sympathy for Mussolini, Franco, and Hitler, and maintained a "no concessions" line, often against his own party, when it came to the independence of India. This reactionary record meant that very few socialists trusted him as a leader against Nazism until the very last moment. (One who eventually did make this plunge was George Orwell, the literary editor and columnist for Aneurin Bevan's excellent politico-cultural weekly, *Tribune*. He admired Bevan: "Here at last is a politician who knows that literature exists and will even hold up work for five minutes to discuss a point of style," and was later to write that if Bevan could be prime minister and he a close adviser, there might be some progress. This was the closest he ever came to expressing an ambition for political power.)

Bevan probably never had a chance of becoming prime minister, but with Churchill elevated to that office by Labour votes, and Labour's leadership part of the wartime coalition, he did become the unofficial leader of the opposition. He was the only member of the House of whom Churchill was in the least bit afraid, and the only one who could match him in eloquence and oratory. During the awful period of steady British defeat in the early years of the war, Bevan was a continual scourge of the incompetence of the General Staff and a strong advocate of a "second front" to help the awesome resistance of the Soviet Union. At a time of widespread sycophancy, he was not afraid to criticize what he saw as the empty bombast of many of Churchill's speeches, or to ridicule him for putting on uniforms at every opportunity when he held no rank and was supposedly the head of a civilian government. However, since Bevan's criticism depended for its effect on the wretched performance of the Allies, it lost much of its force after the victories at El Alamein and Stalingrad, and the entry of the United States into the conflict.

The 1945 election, which pitched out Churchill and his party and installed the first true Labour majority administration, was the revenge for the decades of *laissez-faire* and appeasement. Historians continue to dispute

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CORBIS

Aneurin Bevan, 1950

what happened next: Some argue that British decline begins with this period of statism and welfarism. Two historic changes, however, did unarguably occur. India did become, even if partitioned and amputated, independent. And the National Health Service (NHS) made it possible for anybody in Britain to see a physician. The minister who oversaw the implementation of this program was Bevan. Again, his concept of socialism and solidarity was essentially moral. He cared less about the economics of provision than about the simple notion that people should not live in fear of becoming ill. Before the war, simple deficiency diseases like rickets had been endemic: The authorities in 1939 were appalled to find so many wheezing, stunted, toothless, short-sighted men presenting themselves at recruiting stations. As a Baby Boomer I remember being given the free milk and black currant juice, distributed through the schools, that eliminated such survivals of Victorian slum life. To this day, the British people cherish the principle of the NHS and not even Mrs. Thatcher was willing to privatize all of it.

Bevinism began to triumph over Bevanism, however, through the logic of the Cold War. The costly British effort in Korea meant the imposition of charges for some elements of health care, and in 1950, Bevan resigned from the government in protest at this infringement of the principle. The government itself lost office shortly afterwards, giving way to 13 years of Tory rule. The remaining decade of Bevan's life was spent in trying to rekindle the sort of collective socialist ideal that had animated the 1930s and the wartime years. In retrospect, this battle seems more conservative than radical. Defending Labour's commitment to state ownership of industry was, in a time of increasing postwar affluence, a non-starter. (Nonetheless, the party's "revisionists" did not fully succeed in ditching this commitment until the rise of Tony Blair in the early 1990s.)

The book is marred by a startling elision. Bevan's finest hour, in that last decade of retreat and defeat, was beyond doubt the stand he took, in the fall of 1956, against the Soviet invasion of Hungary and Sir Anthony Eden's doomed, pseudo-Churchillian attempt to retake the Suez Canal. The latter was to be opposed in any case as an effort to resuscitate a moribund colonialism but, as Michael Foot's earlier biography made clear, Bevan was even further incensed by the selfish way that the Tories took the spotlight off Hungary and preoccupied the Eisenhower administration and the U.N. at a time when they should have been focused on the rescue of Budapest. The speeches that he made on that occasion are still remembered, and can be studied with pleasure by anyone who values principle and lucidity. It is unpardonable to skate over such an episode in a couple of bald sentences.

Bevan's rhetorical gift sometimes allowed him prodigies of convolution: He appalled many of his friends on the left by supporting a British independent nuclear capability, and then justified it in a quasi-Gaullist way by saying that it would guarantee British autonomy as against . . . the United States. However, had he lived out a full span before cancer got him, there might have been a Left with a less surly and constipated attitude to the great issues of the Cold War, as well as a Left more surely grounded in humanism and solidarity. Blair is the first Labour leader to win three successive elections. Bevan would have disliked his piety and his obsessive spinmanship, but the better aspects of Blairism—his internationalism, from Sierra Leone to Iraq, and his belief in the civilizing power of a public sector—owe more to the old Welsh moralist than either might care to admit. ♦

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Winging It

A beginner's guide to our feathered friends

BY ROBERT FINCH

A more accurate title for this book would probably be *You May Already Be a Bad Birdwatcher*, for its premise is that just about everyone, merely by instinct and social osmosis, is attracted to watching birds and can already identify, at least generically, a handful of the most common birds—e.g., "swan," "goose," "duck," "sparrow. " The assertion is undeniable, but it also seems trite and vacuous, something like the astonished realization of Molière's bourgeois *gentilhomme* that "for more than 40 years I have been speaking prose without knowing it!" Big whooping crane.

How to Be a Bad Birdwatcher
by Simon Barnes
Pantheon, 240 pp., $17.95

This is too bad, because in the end I found Simon Barnes an interesting writer and *How to Be a Bad Birdwatcher* a worthwhile read. His initial approach, however, seems dumbed-down, condescending, and overwritten, as if he doesn't really trust his readers or the inherent interest of his subject.

Actually, this is not a "how-to" book at all. The information it conveys about birds and birdwatching is thin and superficial. Here, for instance, is the sum of Barnes's advice regarding binoculars: "Get a pair." Any pair. Quality doesn't matter. Nor does he have much to say about becoming a "better birdwatcher": "It's just a matter of getting the habit. The habit of looking. And listening . . . ." Encouraging and inclusive, perhaps, but it tends to belittle the effort, dedication, discipline, acquisition of knowledge, and, yes, better equipment that it usually takes to develop into a genuinely accomplished birdwatcher, and the increased rewards of doing so.

In the opening chapters Barnes attempts to inflate the significance of birdwatching by dismissing such "lesser" hobbies as stamp, coin, and matchbox collecting: "I find it hard to believe that people like these things for themselves; they are just a medium for collection mania." As a former teenage numismatist, I can vouch that even dedicated coin collectors bring as much aesthetic, historic, and discriminatory passion to their subjects as amateur ornithologists do.

Even more off-putting is his ploy of exalting the status and significance of birds by demeaning other animals. Yes, we all know that birdsong and flight have inspired artists throughout history. Not content to acknowledge this, however, Barnes quotes "Ode to a Nightingale" and then sneers, "Keats would not have written the same poem after smelling a pile of dog turds. Humans cannot sympathize with dogs, with fellow mammals, in that way." This from an Englishman!

After a few chapters I began to wonder: Just who would read this book? Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of bird identification will already feel beyond its scope. Adults who have never actively birdwatched are not likely to be turned onto the sport by a book that contains no pictures, drawings, or diagrams of the birds themselves, and is woefully short on the particular characteristics and behavior of individual species.

If anything, the book seemed aimed at a peculiarly specialized audience composed of people who may have *thought* about birdwatching, but have been deterred by an intimidating concept of its difficulties, or by the superior attitude of those obsessive birdwatchers Barnes calls "twitchers." The extent of such an audience, if it was ever significant, was basically eliminated with the appearance of the Roger Tory Peterson guides in the 1930s, which made birdwatching accessible to virtually everyone.

At first, the book's main attraction seems to be the engagingly English tone of its author: wry, witty, self-deprecating, at once proper and slangy, and given to admittedly bad and "naughty" puns ("Some birdwatchers call great tits 'Dolly Partons,' ho ho ho"). This is not necessarily a recipe for literary failure. After all, no one ever learned much about maintaining a Harley by reading *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.*

Moreover, Barnes shows a knack for making interesting correlations between birdwatching and the larger sphere of human experience. Unfortunately, just as he tends to puff up his subject unnecessarily, he tends to spoil these connections with exaggerated corollaries. For instance, he observes, "birdwatching embraces both halves of our natural desire for contradiction. It brings us enhanced enjoyment of the ordinary, the easy, and the safe, and it brings us high drama and gratification and dangerous delight." Nice enough, but then he goes on, "Rather like life, really. And that is what bad birdwatching is all about. Life, that is to say." Well, as Emerson might say, "What isn't?"

This tendency to make overinflated claims for his subject risks provoking involuntary perverse reactions in the reader. I finally came across one too many such Hallmark-like comments as, "Birds can light up your life just a little, wherever you happen to be," and wished myself looking at a snowy egret with the author, just so I could quip, "Wouldn't that look nice on a hat?"

Still, any writer who expresses a

Robert Finch is author, most recently, of Death of a Hornet and Other Cape Cod Essays *and coeditor of* The Norton Book of Nature Writing.

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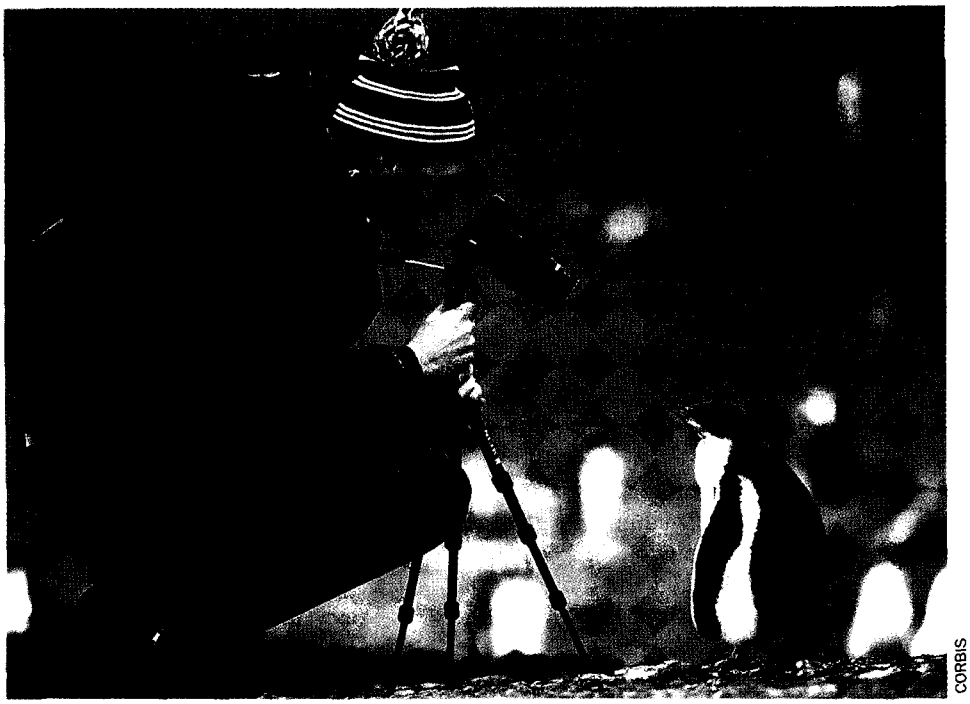

CORBIS

Ecotourist in Antarctica

dislike for *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* can't be all bad, and, in fact, Barnes becomes less sappy, his attitude less superior, and his observations more subtle as the book progresses. For instance, in the chapter "Simon knows the names of things," he notes that the simple act of naming a bird can change our relationship to it, but he also cautions the reader against getting "all silly and new-agey about this."

"Birdwatching," he reminds us, "is almost by definition a one-way relationship." He also eschews his earlier sentimentality with such observations as, "Alas, you can't rely entirely on birds for their good taste: rubbish tips, as we have seen, are a favorite [habitat]. So are sewage farms and nuclear power stations." He even has the courage, rare among environmentalists, to admit that confronting global ecological issues can often seem "frightfully dreary" and "humdrum," while nonetheless passionately defending the necessity of doing so.

The later chapters, in general, contain a great deal more adult intellectual fare. "Teeming Hordes," for instance, is an engaging introduction to the critical concept of biodiversity—though here again, Barnes can't seem to resist drawing politically correct lessons from natural phenomena: "We are here to celebrate diversity. That is what birdwatching means." It also includes an intelligent critique of "the myth of perfection" in evolution, illustrating that the lay evolutionist is just as prone to myths as the lay creationist.

Barnes's descriptions of his own birding adventures, and some of his birding partners, are entertaining and intriguing, particularly the character of Shirtless Tim, whose predilection for spartan and uncomfortable camping conditions Barnes describes as "a certain gluttony for austerity." At the same time, I could have wished for more hard information about things unfamiliar to the American reader. For instance, he gives a tantalizing description of the Scrape, a portion of the Minismere Reserve that he calls "the most famous bit of habitat in British birdwatching," without really locating it or explaining why it deserves this hyperbolic appellation.

Several of the concepts Barnes discusses are well-plowed ground, but are nonetheless worth revisiting. "Bad Birds" poses interesting questions about E.O. Wilson's notion of "biophilia," or the inborn attraction of human beings to life and life processes. Noting nature's inherent amorality, cruelty, and indifference, Barnes asks, "Why do we turn to it? Why are we so enthralled by its beauties?" These are deep questions, with profound scientific, philosophical, even religious, implications; but his answers are disappointingly bland and solipsistic, e.g., "We humans are part of nature, and part of us indeed reacts very strongly to the natural world." Better are some of his specific ecological observations, such as the counterintuitive fact that it is not predators who control prey, but rather the number of prey that control the numbers of predators.

The best chapter in the book is "And All That Jizz," a fascinating discussion of one of the less-recognized, though central, elements in good birdwatching; that is, the ability to recognize birds by their "jizz" or *gestalt*: that configuration or pattern of physical, behavioral, and numerous other characteristics that enable experienced birdwatchers to identify from a brief glimpse, or at a great distance, or under poor conditions. Here is an instance where Barnes could justifiably have made larger claims for this aspect of birdwatching, for pattern recognition is still an underappreciated and under-cultivated learning resource in human beings.

Towards the end of the book, Barnes confesses that he wrote it with "an evangelical purpose as strident as a great tit's song"; namely, to open the eyes and ears of his readers to the wonders of nature through birdwatching. A worthy goal, surely, but *How to Be a Bad Birdwatcher* ultimately works neither as a guide to birdwatching nor, primarily, as a celebration of nature, but, rather, as an entertaining account of his own adventures with birds and an often-perceptive exploration of certain traits of human nature illuminated through the prism of birdwatching.

This is ultimately an intellectually rewarding book, but its author should have had more faith in his readers and put more of the good stuff up front. ♦

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The FBI Informant

Bob Woodward cashes in on Watergate—again.

BY JAMES ROSEN

Children learn early never to judge a book by its cover, but in the case of Bob Woodward's latest, the practice would hardly lead one astray. For the back cover of this slender, charitably padded volume conveys virtually everything you need to know about both the author's familiar take on events and his surprising disregard for the facts.

The Secret Man
The Story of Watergate's Deep Throat
by Bob Woodward
Simon & Schuster, 256 pp., $23

At top, sporting his Charley Pride hair and Elton John eyeglasses, appears W. Mark Felt, the former number-two man in the FBI, now unmasked as "Deep Throat," the mysterious source for Woodward's Watergate-era reporting. At bottom appears an iconic image of America's 37th president, driven from office by the Watergate scandal, his arms outstretched in the defiant victory wave he gave before boarding the helicopter that spirited him to exile. The jacket copy identifies this lower photograph as "Former President Richard M. Nixon after resigning office on August 9, 1974."

In fact, when Nixon bounded the steps of Marine One that day, he was still president; his resignation did not take effect until Air Force One was aloft. More to the point, the juxtaposition of Felt's photograph with one of Nixon leaving office is meant to assert some causal connection between the two, to reaffirm the centrality of Felt, Woodward, and his reporting partner, Carl Bernstein—and the *Washington Post* itself—in Nixon's downfall.

James Rosen, a Fox News Washington correspondent, is author of the forthcoming The Strong Man: John Mitchell, Nixon, and Watergate.

Such assertions are specious. Among those who long ago deflated the myth that Benjamin Bradlee's boys unraveled the Watergate cover-up was the plot's admitted ringleader, John Dean, who wrote in 1975 that if he "had had to contend only with the *Washington Post*, the Watergate cover-up would probably have succeeded." Dean elaborated in 1982:

> I can say without equivocation that *not one story* written by Woodward and Bernstein for the *Washington Post*, from the time of the arrest[s] on June 17, 1972 until the election in November 1972, gave anyone in the Nixon White House or the reelection committee the slightest concern that "Woodstein" was on to the real story of Watergate.

Had Nixon's men found a way to funnel $1 million in untraceable cash to the original break-in defendants, an option that remained open for nine months, Nixon would have served as president until January 1977, when his second term expired, and several momentous events and trends in modern American history—the fall of Saigon, for example, or the intelligence community's emasculation in the period between Watergate and 9/11—would likely have unfolded rather differently. That the president and his men could not manage so trivial a feat seems almost quaint today, and perhaps more than anything else justified their removal from power; to handle the same problem one imagines latter-day White Houses taking no more than 20 minutes, inquiring only about the denominations required.

The grand jury that spooked Dean and Jeb Magruder into plea bargains, used their testimony to indict Nixon's top aides, and subpoenaed his incriminating tapes, was given new life in March 1973 not because of anything the *Post* reported, but because of the letter that Watergate burglar James McCord sent to Judge John J. Sirica that month, confessing that higher-ups were involved in the break-in, and that pressure had been placed on the original defendants to remain silent. In the days before the McCord letter, Woodward had ruefully concluded "there was going to be no additional disclosure" in the case, as he admitted to CBS News in May 1973.

It was, then, a combination of disinformation and its essential accomplice, ignorance, that produced all the breathless hype that accompanied *Vanity Fair*'s disclosure of Felt's identity in May. On *Good Morning America*, ABC's Charlie Gibson crowned Felt "the secret source who brought down a president"; CNN's Paula Zahn touted "a top FBI man that brought down a president"; and Anderson Cooper displayed a tad more judiciousness, noting that Felt "helped topple a president."

James McCord should have sued for libel!

Not only were the *Washington Post* and Deep Throat largely extraneous to the outcome of Watergate, the celebrated source was often wrong—wildly wrong—in the "information" he supplied Woodward. Bradlee's frequent claim that "everything he told us was true," as he declared in an online chat this summer, is now flatly contradicted by Woodward's own (belated) acknowledgment in *The Secret Man*: "Decades later, reviewing everything Felt said to me, it is apparent he was wrong on a number of things." To recount all the matters on which Deep Throat and the *Post* proved inaccurate during Watergate would exhaust available space here; but Bradlee need only reread *All the President's Men* to see how fertile the ground would be for an ambitious grad student unafraid to challenge convention (and induce cardiac arrest in his professors).

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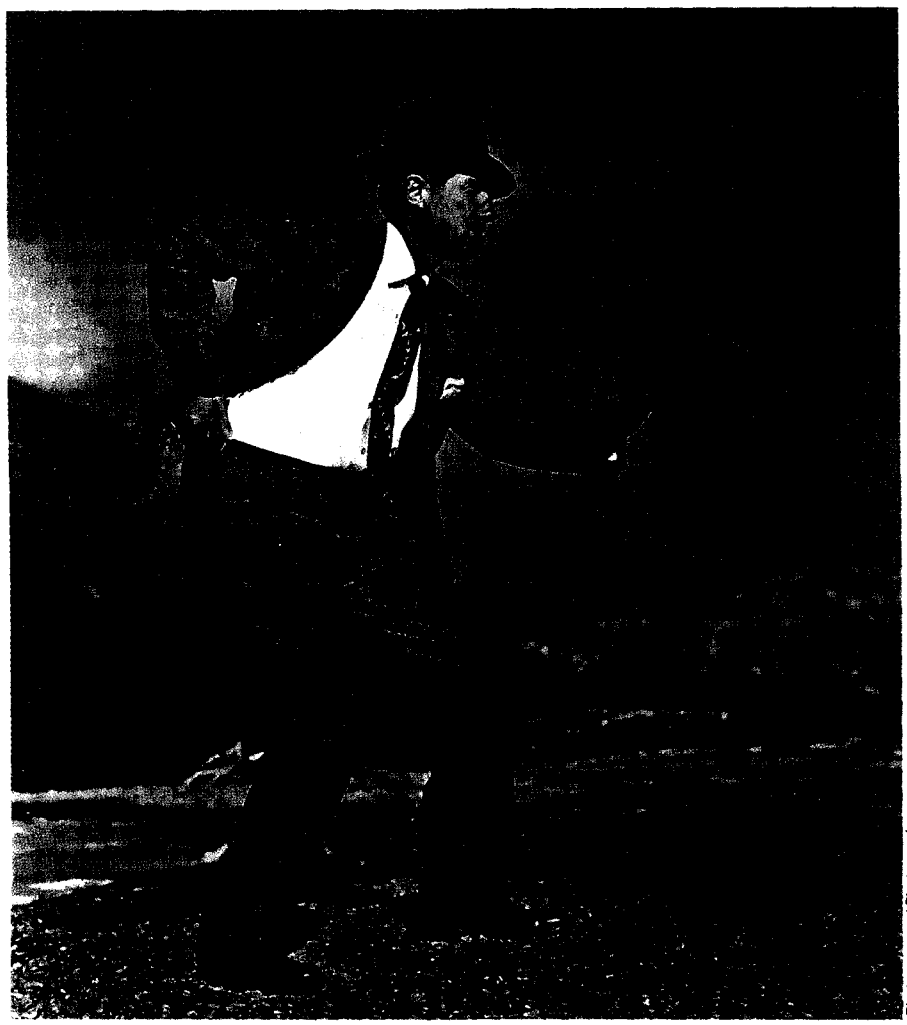

Photo agency / Photographer

Deep Throat near Salt Lake City, 1958

Why, then, should anyone bother to read an entire book about an individual who was immaterial to the arc and resolution of Watergate, who was often grossly uninformed about it, and who—far from having "remained silent" all these years, as was routinely stated in recent days—repeatedly lied about his role, both in interviews and his own memoir, even in grand jury proceedings? The answer is that *The Secret Man* tells readers much more about Bob Woodward than about Mark Felt, whose motivations and inner psyche were rendered unknowable by a recent stroke, even to the reporter he made famous. (Not that Woodward didn't try. The book's ugliest section recounts his dogged attempt to tape the elderly Felt discussing Watergate, despite the old man's painfully obvious amnesia.)

Here, for the first time, is Woodward conceding some shortcomings, then and now: immaturity; overweening ambition; "shame" over his impositions on Felt and occasional violations of their deal; dishonesty, as required, to keep Felt's identity secret; and an odd inability to unravel certain aspects of their dealings, cavalierly dismissed here as "technical, wiring-diagram issues."

These include the small matters of how Felt was able to observe the younger man's balcony every day; scribble on his home-delivered copy of the *New York Times*; and convey information about erasures on Nixon's tapes that was unknown even to the FBI from which Felt had, in any case, already retired.

"I never found out how Felt had learned this significant detail," Woodward shrugs, before moving on.

Woodward's newfound penchant for self-examination might have gone further. Chief among this book's flaws is factual sloppiness that cannot be blamed on an ill-informed, or amnesiac, Felt. Repeatedly, Woodward misidentifies the original Watergate prosecutor, Earl Silbert. (He was *assistant* U.S. attorney at the time of his investigation, not U.S. attorney.)

"Part of John Mitchell's conviction in the Watergate cover-up trial in 1975 was based on his lying to FBI agents," Woodward also writes. Had he bothered to review the *U.S. v. Mitchell* trial transcript, Woodward would have known that this charge against Mitchell was thrown out by Judge Sirica, and that prosecutor Richard Ben-Veniste, in a futile attempt to make the charge stick, proposed the compulsion of testimony by Woodward and Bernstein.

Most questionable is Woodward's assertion that history's "autopsy" on Watergate "seems nearly complete." Absent from *All the President's Men* and *The Final Days*, the immovable corpus of the Woodward-Bernstein Watergate text, is any mention of Spencer Oliver, the Democratic National Committee official whose telephone was the only instrument successfully monitored during the three-week lifespan of the surveillance operation McCord and company conducted.

For that matter, nowhere in those two books, or in *The Secret Man* (for which Bernstein contributes a wistful, unquestioning coda, described on the cover as a "reporter's assessment"), will be found even a game attempt to explain why Oliver's telephone was tapped; who ordered the operation, and why; and what role in these intrigues (if any) was played by the Central Intelligence Agency.

These are the central, unresolved mysteries of Watergate, not the rigged parlor game of Deep Throat's identity, so relentlessly pushed to the forefront of discussion every few years by people who have always known better, and always profited handsomely. ♦

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Tale of the New West

Kicking the corpses of postmodern America.

BY RANDY BOYAGODA

"No pleasure but meanness," Flannery O'Connor's wickedest line, could easily stand as the credo for Cormac McCarthy's fiction.

While McCarthy has long been in a symphonic conversation with that testosterone quartet of American writers—Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Herman Melville, and James Fenimore Cooper—his work may resonate most against that demure little Georgia lady's stories. Like O'Connor, McCarthy populates his world with homicidal moralists and hayseed philosophers, fills it with absurdity and brutality, and delivers what grace there is with the velvet touch of a sledgehammer.

No Country for Old Men
by Cormac McCarthy
Knopf, 320 pp., $26

The difficulty with McCarthy, more than O'Connor, is that his virtuoso imaginings of American life in its primal viciousness tend to overwhelm many readers to the point where they miss the deeply moral criticism at work amid the viscera. In his latest novel, the moral dimension is more emphatically on offer, if accompanied by the predictable overload of carnage (the most creative of which is done with an air-powered stun gun designed for cattle slaughter). Yet McCarthy avoids any stiff moralizing by issuing his charges against America's contemporary cultural devolution through the folksy meditations of an aging small-town sheriff. This character tries—and fails, with a measure of honor—to bring to justice *"some new kind"* of killer on the loose in the late 20th-century Texas badlands of scrub desert and interstate, cheap motels and trailer parks, Vietnam veterans and Mexican drug-runners. The result is an altogether readable novel that intertwines fated-ness with a desire for redemption, amid much greed and gore.

Randy Boyagoda is a fellow at the Erasmus Institute at Notre Dame.

The novel's protagonist, Llewelyn Moss, is a hardscrabble ex-soldier prone to tough-guy poetics: "By the time he got up he knew that he was probably going to have to kill somebody. He just didnt know who it was." On a hunting trip, Moss happens on a drug deal gone murderously bad. He comes away with $2 million stuffed in a briefcase. Seemingly in the clear upon returning to his young wife and their trailer, he is compelled to go back. There was one man left alive in the desert, barely, who kept begging for *agua* while Moss inspected the rotting corpses, bags of heroin, and array of materiel. And so Moss fills up a jug. "For a Mexican dopedealer. Yeah. Well. Everybody is somethin."

Stubbly *caritas* sets up poetic justice, McCarthy-style: Not only is the man dead upon Moss's reaching him, not only does Moss then get discovered by parties who come after him with unstinting vengeance, but after an initial escape that leaves him breathless and bruised under the hot Texas sun, he realizes that he himself "hadnt even taken a drink."

The ensuing manhunt ranges across Texas and down into Mexico and involves rival bands of mercenaries, a one-man killing machine named Chigurh, and a host of square-jawed lawmen confronted by a mounting body count and opaque leads. The shootouts, chases, and stoic dialogue give the novel something of a pulpy texture at times, and the prose can be so intensely visual and heavy with action that it reads cinematically:

> He turned up Adams Street and the car skidded sideways through the intersection in a cloud of rubbersmoke and stopped. The engine had died and the driver was trying to start it. Two men had come from the car and were crossing the street on foot at a run. One of them opened fire with a small caliber machinegun and he fired at them with the shotgun and then loped on with the warm blood seeping into his crotch.

Moss gets away, at least here, but the novel's picaresque and pictorial violence never exhausts itself.

In his equally violent past fiction, McCarthy revealed vast interior spaces in men otherwise taken for cardboard cutouts: cattle rustlers and frontiersmen and all manner of desperadoes from the Old West. He attempts likewise with a New West cast this time, but the result is not as piercing. McCarthy provides Moss with on-the-run reflections that never really open unto any depth suggested by his Vietnam past. Instead, the character comes off, too programmatically, as a mixture of kindhearted toughness and existential bitterness trying to make good in spite of it all.

Meanwhile, Chigurh, with his stun-gun stalking and coin-flipping nihilism, seems to be an update on the apocalyptically evil Judge from *Blood Meridian*. But again, the composition is overly familiar, both in the context of his far more capacious predecessor and in terms of his contemporariness. A passing dismissal from another character proves to be only too accurate: "He's a psychopathic killer but so what? There's plenty of them around."

McCarthy's finest creation is the novel's third major character, Sheriff Bell. In a series of italicized prologues to each chapter, Bell considers his life as a servant of justice in a country that has lost its sense of the concept. This produces many folk-wise, bitterly funny, and incisive reflections, as evi-

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denced (for example) by Bell's encounter with an enlightened secularite. She confides to him: "I dont like the way this country is headed. I want my granddaughter to be able to have an abortion," to which he responds, consolingly, "The way I see it goin . . . not only will she be able to have an abortion, she'll be able to have you put to sleep. Which pretty much ended the conversation."

Bell's survey of the corrosions and crudities of American life finds constant affirmation in the events of the novel itself, and yet the sheriff keeps after the greater good. His particular interest in saving Moss from Chigurh involves a desire to redeem a selfish act from his past by sacrificing himself for this fellow man. But Moss's misplaced self-reliance, and Chigurh's brutal efficiency, deny him the chance. Bell is left with a bitter feeling, though this is gladdening for the reader to encounter: "It was defeat. It was being beaten."

Exposed to so much human ugliness and moral indifference, Bell remains committed to the eternal verities of right and wrong, and so can know and care when injustice has won out. Reading even a minor novel from a great writer willing to bring such moral intelligence to bear upon contemporary America, awash in its blood and irony, is no mean pleasure. ♦

Radio Troubadour

Jean Shepherd and his empire of the air.

BY RICHARD ORODENKER

American humor in the 1950s would be less defined by television, which was still in its infancy, than by radio (and the radio shows that made their transition to television), and by humor magazines such as *MAD*, especially its earliest incarnation in comic book form.

It would be defined also by the edgy, intellectual nightclub comics, from Lenny Bruce and Mort Sahl to Nichols and May; and it would be greatly influenced by the last faint voices of radio as that medium began to die away: Stan Freberg, who parodied radio commercials, Bob and Ray, perhaps the most ingenious of the group, and the brilliant monologist Jean Shepherd.

Excelsior, You Fathead!
The Art and Enigma of Jean Shepherd
by Eugene B. Bergmann
Applause, 496 pp., $27.95

When "Shep" entered radio, it was as if everyone had simply abandoned the broadcast booth, leaving everything still up and running, including an open mike for someone with a lot of imagination to do as he pleased. Jean Shepherd did just that, spinning yarns of his Midwestern childhood. Notes Eugene Bergmann: "There was a continual elaboration and enrichment with new detail, a continuing entertaining funniness as well as wit, and his listeners found intellectual pleasures in apprehending his mind at work."

Jean Shepherd paved the way for contemporary figures, from Spalding Gray to Howard Stern. And this book's title comes from an infamous hoax Shepherd perpetrated, when he asked his listeners to go to bookstores and ask for a nonexistent book called *I, Libertine*. When the clerk would ask who published it, the listener was to respond, "Excelsior, you fathead!"

Growing up in Hammond, Indiana, a small, steel mill town he reinvented as Hohman, Shepherd listened to all the old radio programs. His favorites were *Vic and Sadie*, *Little Orphan Annie*, Jack Benny, and Fred Allen. A more direct precursor may have been the droll comic Henry Morgan, who ad-libbed his monologues and knocked his sponsors, once accusing the makers of Life Savers of cheating the customer by punching little holes through their mints.

The few radio shows that did last until the 1960s, including some surviving soap operas and Arthur Godfrey in the mornings, were for the moms who stayed home and the retirees who never left their rocking chairs. As music and DJs began to take over the airwaves, Shepherd (on WOR in New York) catered to the off-hour listeners, the Night People, his loyal Baby Boomer fans, for whom he provided a cynical brand of Midwestern humor filled with red state, blue collar perceptiveness, which, as he said of Jack Benny, "was the humor of *attitude*." If it seems dated today, it is only because it was never vulgar. Pungent, irreverent, funny, but also rather nostalgic or, at times, as he reminded people, "*anti*-nostalgic."

Unfortunately, Jean Shepherd will not be remembered for his radio programs, as Bob and Ray still are, even though Bergmann provides generous selections from his radio transcriptions. Those improvisational narratives are not scripted literary gems in the way Winston Churchill's or C.S. Lewis's radio broadcasts were, although there are joyous moments ("I'm a constant observer of cracks in the sidewalk"). But Shepherd left behind a small but impressive collection of fiction/memoir/essays (his work defies any single genre, really), many of which are important contributions to American literary humor of the Depression era and postwar America he would come to satirize, and which certainly belong in the company of the best of Ambrose Bierce, Mark Twain, James Thurber, and S.J. Perelman.

Shepherd was in his late seventies

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Jean Shepherd

when he died in 1999, and it surprised most people that he was that old. He had grown up during the Depression, and his stories are set in those memorable years. If there is a war going on, it is in the background (he entered the army in 1942). Yet he describes not so much a place and time as an *idea* of America, which can be 1962 as easily as it was 1932.

Apparently his father—who figures prominently in many of the stories, sometimes fondly, sometimes resentfully—was "somewhat dull-witted and pedestrian," and may have left Shepherd's mother for an office secretary. His stories, involving Ralph/Ralphie (Shepherd's alter ego), Schwartz, Bruner, and Flick were about the angst of growing up in what only feel like halcyon days—and how intimidating they could be. But he never strayed from the core values of America, which he loved deeply, criticized openly, and defended passionately. He wrote valentines to American icons and rituals: county fairs, family vacations, baseball, junior proms, Army life, and Fourth of July picnics.

Shepherd's settings were the steel mills, the Bluebird Tavern, and Warren G. Harding Elementary School; his subjects, "slob art," "Creeping Meatballism," "effluvia," and "glop"; his characters, the backbreaking laborers and office grunts for whom "there's nothing like a cold Blatz and the end of a hard day."

Were it not for the perennial Christmas movie he wrote (*A Christmas Story*), and a small but faithful legion of followers, Shepherd would be all but forgotten today, like another humorist of the early 20th century, George Ade, about whom Shepherd wrote his first book. He felt largely ignored in his own time, and begrudged the neglect. The fact that he narrated all of his movies means that he might live on in some small, indefinite way. He did numerous cameos: In *Ollie Hopnoodle's Haven of Bliss*, he plays Mr. Scott, who looks like "a cross between Rasputin and the Wolf Man." Anyone who visits the World of Tomorrow at Epcot Center will hear his voice span the decades of American progress.

There are a few problems with this book. For one, it's too long, and several facts are mentioned more than twice. It offers too much psychobiography, unnecessary inquiry, and didacticism, sometimes all wrapped up in a single paragraph. For example: "Thus, we encounter a Jean Shepherd not only vastly more accomplished artistically than we may once have imagined, but at the same time we see a man vastly deeper, darker, more damaged—which is both baffling and disconcerting. Disconcerting because we must realize that youthful, optimistic assumptions and enthusiasms may rest on insecure foundations—and we walk at our peril over cracks in the sidewalks."

You have to cut through a lot of verbiage to get to what might be a salient observation.

In the end, however, it hardly matters whether Shepherd's "tales and parables . . . may or may not have been partly true to fact." What he created were myths of America that nearly anyone could identify with, and revealed essential truths. When Ralph sees that he will *not* take the most beautiful girl in the school to the junior prom, but will instead ask "that nice Wanda Hickey," he realizes "there was no sense fighting it. Some guys are born to dance forever with the Daphne Bigelows on shining ballroom floors under endless starry skies. Others—well, they do the best they can." It doesn't matter that ballroom floors are not under starry skies; we get the picture. We, too, like Ralph, "are beginning to suspect something."

That something was the truth about life in the great American middle class. Jean Shepherd would find fault with those who trashed those virtues of America, "the country he loved," writes Bergmann, "and which he defended against the frequent put-downs and disparagements heard in the 1960s and 1970s." If he criticized America and Americans, it was for squandering those virtues. ♦

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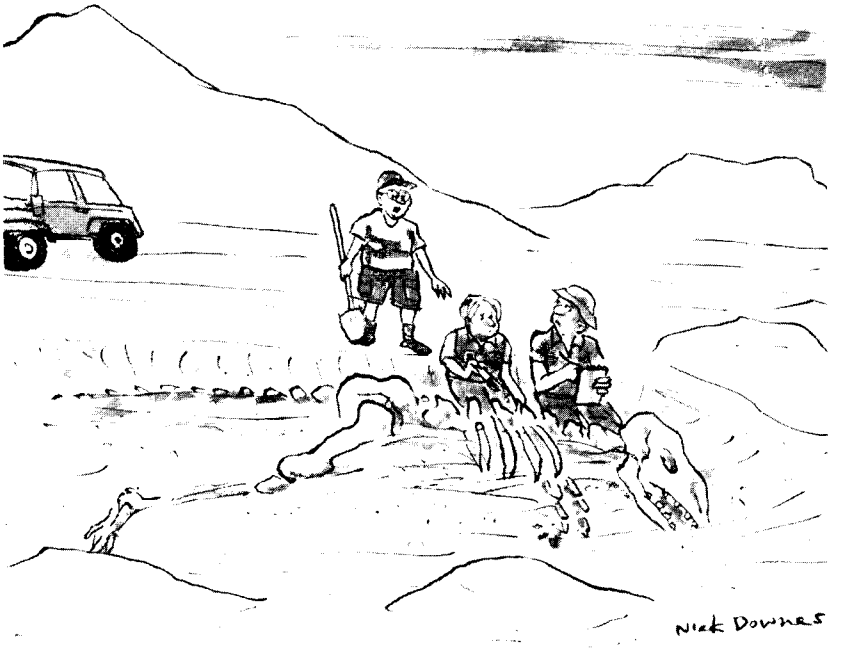

"Why, we've unearthed the dinosaur display of an ancient natural history museum!"

Books in Brief

***Freddy and Fredericka* by Mark Helprin (Penguin, 576 pp., $27.95)** *Freddy and Fredericka* is one long, but highly readable, book. It's admirably suited for the summer season, when many of us have a bit of leisure time to settle into a good story.

Reading Helprin is sheer joy. The praise on the book jacket that testifies to Helprin's splendid mastery of language and compares him to Joyce and Nabokov is confirmed as soon as one opens the book. Few American writers today can handle the English language with such ease and consummate virtuosity. Consider this description of the Mississippi River:

> The shore was ever-changing, a world of twisted limbs and bleached tree trunks resting askew on sandbars; of fields under the spray of irrigation machinery that rolled slowly on twenty-foot wheels; of rivers joining the Mississippi like new riders swelling a procession of horsemen; of birds that floated on air cast back by boats and barges; of towns that had died long before but refused to sleep or go under because they could not cease watching the river; of bay-like widenings that promised the sea at the end of the flow; of bridges that passed overhead, the bottoms of their decks space-black from hundreds of years of coal and diesel smoke; of fields that burned in little worm-like lines of gold wool; of the wind that fed the fires as they crawled across the fields, made safe by the mile of water that stopped their sweeps; and of the progress of the banks as the boat threaded through tangled nature, charging onward and full of the promise of life.

The tale of Freddy and Fredericka proceeds from the amiable premise that once upon a recent time in Great Britain there lived a glamorous and much-talked-about prince and princess of Wales. Freddy—though nearly 40—just doesn't have the makings of a king. He's a nice enough fellow but is spoiled and has a tendency to muck up on public occasions. His princess is extremely beautiful but is also spoiled and ditzy.

The queen and her consort Prince Paul call an adviser, Mr. Neil (an anagram of the wizard Merlin), who comes up with a solution that will make the young couple fit to reign. They are to parachute into Hoboken, New Jersey, penniless and in a primitive disguise: naked except for panels of rabbit fur attached to their bodies with thin straps of green snakeskin. In America, Freddy will prove his worth by trying to make it in "a vast land inhabited by fierce, clever, and industrious creatures—monsters. The most savage land on earth." Success means they will have to work hard and acquire some humility.

In the course of their American experiences, Freddy and Fredericka grow up through a series of adventures that have them zigzagging all over the country. At one point Fredericka is scrubbing toilets in a huge office building. Later, in his grandest job, Freddy finds himself secretly advising a long-shot presidential candidate. (It's probably no coincidence that Helprin is a former speechwriter for Robert Dole.)

While Helprin has a grand time with this creative frolic through American states and institutions, he is also genuinely serious in his admiration of all that is fundamentally good about America. Indeed, *Freddy and Fredericka* is a refreshing celebration of American virtues. It also happens to be an utterly beguiling book.

—*Cynthia Grenier*

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From the fall 2005 course catalog of Montgomery College, Montgomery County, Md.

Not a Parody

Noncredit Courses

NEW

Whiteness Studies

These three sessions will stimulate reflection and research into how people "became White." "Whiteness" can be viewed as a powerful social and legal construct put in place over centuries to provide access and leverage for opportunities. It's often taught and reinforced nonverbally and through subtle sanctions for going outside "the rules." Course participants will look at changing definitions of "White" or "Caucasian" over time; examine how people learn the norms, behaviors, and roles of this status; and address tensions of those who feel "forced to choose" one label or another. Additional topics to be discussed include what it might mean to foster equity in society, given disparities in status; and discuss how to help children deal with changes in demographics, identity, labels, bias, and power. Tuition waiver applies; seniors pay fee only.

Course: DIV103

$79 + $20 fee = $99; Non-residents: Add $50

Takoma Park/Silver Spring Campus

CRN#: 24992	T	11/8-11/22
100 CA	6:30-9pm	3 sessions

NEW

Welcoming Chinese Customers and Clients

Businesses that want to reach the growing population of Chinese speakers in the Mid-Atlantic region may need to re-think their marketing strategies and tactics. Successful corporations are finding it essential to build long-term ibility and cultural credibility with these custome in-language advertising, partnerships, and co-s What can small to mid-sized businesses do? gies of outreach and promotion bring in promotions, services, and products how much money does this

the weekly Standard

August 29, 2005

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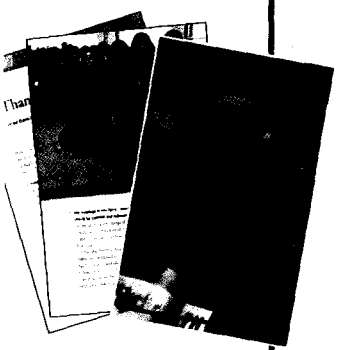
Reforming Malpractice Liability

HOOVER DIGEST
RESEARCH AND OPINION ON PUBLIC POLICY



FREE ISSUE

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Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

The medical liability system is in serious trouble. Injuries due to poor medical care are the leading cause of accidental death in the United States. **According to the Institute of Medicine, between 44,000 and 98,000 deaths a year are caused by medical mistakes.** Medication errors alone account for approximately 7,000 deaths a year, exceeding the number of deaths due to workplace injuries. And when a person is injured, the system functions more like a lottery than a rational compensation scheme. According to the Harvard Medical Practice Study, only one in fifteen patients who suffer an injury because of medical negligence receives compensation; by contrast, five out of six of the cases that receive compensation show no evidence of negligence.

At the same time, the system is tremendously costly. Litigation expenses and other transaction costs account for more than half of malpractice compensation expenses. "Defensive medicine"—treatment decisions based on fear of legal liability rather than on patients' best interests—further drives up health-care costs and reduces access to care.

What should we do? Conventional tort reforms, such as reasonable caps on noneconomic damages, are a good first step. Caps reduce the malpractice pressure on doctors and hospitals and, in turn, reduce the prevalence and cost of defensive medicine—without significant or substantial consequences for quality. In a series of papers, Mark McClellan and I have documented how reforms reduce health-care costs. We analyzed the hospital expenditures and health outcomes of elderly Medicare beneficiaries with serious cardiac illness in the 1980s and 1990s. We found that patients from states with reforms such as caps had lower expenditures for their hospital care but the same rates of mortality and complications.

Conventional reforms have other beneficial effects. In an article in this June's *Journal of the American Medical Association,* David Becker, Bill Sage, and I investigate the effect of reforms on physician supply. **We find that states adopting reforms such as caps on damages showed approximately 3 percent greater growth in the supply of physicians than states without reforms.** An independent analysis published in *Health Affairs* by William Encinosa and Fred Hellinger reaches virtually the same conclusion. This expansion in supply not only improves access but also enhances competition among physicians, which helps keep costs down and quality up.

But defensive medicine is only part of the problem. For this reason, researchers and policymakers should take up three other ideas to reform the liability system.

First, patients and their health-care providers should be given more freedom to experiment with alternatives to the courts. Second, we should reform an important rule of evidence. Data on adverse medical events collected by providers to improve the quality of care should not be admissible in malpractice cases. Third, it should be easier to use clinical practice guidelines (written statements of what constitutes appropriate treatment for a specific illness, set of symptoms, or type of patient) in malpractice trials.

Stay tuned for details next week.

—Daniel P. Kessler

Daniel P. Kessler is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and professor at the Graduate School of Business at Stanford University.

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Kids are about to see a different type of change from school vending machines.

Childhood obesity is a complex problem that can only be solved when kids, parents, schools, communities and business all do their part.

For years, the beverage industry has worked to reduce obesity and promote overall wellness. Our members have sponsored educational and fitness programs across the country. We've also created a wide variety of nutritious and lower-calorie products that support healthy lifestyles, and we're developing more.

Now we're taking another step to support parents, kids and communities. Today, the beverage industry is introducing a new school vending policy that will make available a variety of choices to kids of different ages. And we're asking all beverage producers and school districts to implement this new policy as soon as they can.

Healthy and active kids can certainly enjoy soft drinks and juice drinks as part of a balanced lifestyle. While parents can help kids make good nutrition and regular exercise priorities at home, they can't always control the decisions their kids make at school. So, they've looked to us for help. And we're responding. After all, everyone wants happy, healthy kids.

Our new school vending policy:

It's all about variety, nutrition and lower-calorie beverages.

Elementary School

- Only bottled water and 100 percent juice.

Middle School

- Only nutritious and/or lower-calorie beverages.
- No full-calorie soft drinks and no full-calorie juice drinks with five percent fruit juice or less during school hours.

High School

- Variety of beverage choices.
- No more than 50 percent soft drinks.

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